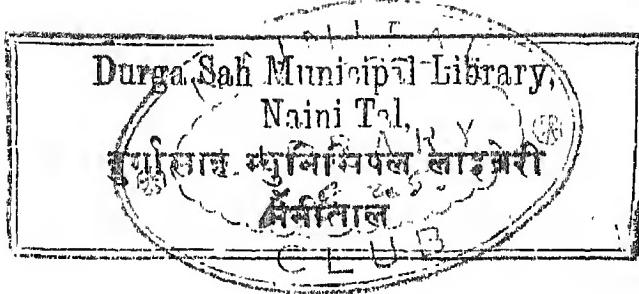


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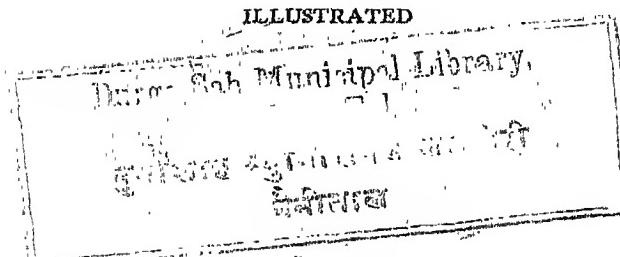
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In Search of Sensation

*Being Thirty Years
of a London Journalist's Life*

by
S. Theodore Felstead

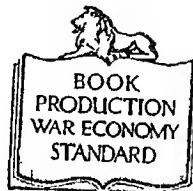


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INTRODUCTION

I HAVE taken the liberty of writing a book about the Street of Adventure, which seeks to portray the life of what is commonly known as a free-lance journalist. The late Mr. Justice Darling, in one of his celebrated witticisms, once described the Press as being licensed meddlers in the affairs of other people. Everybody in Court dutifully laughed and the matter at issue proceeded on its way.

Nevertheless, the newspapers do but chronicle the passing times, with a faithfulness and a fairness in this country which compares more than favourably with the rest of the world. What was good enough for a newspaper forty or fifty years ago, would never be acceptable to-day. This is an age of infinitely greater frankness between the Government and the people than existed, say, in the period of William Ewart Gladstone.

What is stigmatized as "popular journalism" is but a reflection of the public demand for more intimate detail of the world around them, supported considerably by a tacit refusal to accept the stiff and starchy methods of news presentation which satisfied an older generation.

Living as we do in an age that changes with bewildering rapidity, an age that the newspapers cater for with a freedom and a journalistic ability completely unknown in days gone by, it is only to be expected, I suppose, that this development of life should come in for a good deal of criticism from those who pride themselves on being old-fashioned.

But Time keeps marching on; where thousands of men and women read newspapers in the piping days of Queen Victoria, they can now be numbered in millions. They are not people likely to be attracted by politics or the abstract problems of their life. Their inclinations and their interests lie largely towards the human side of our existence, the things that can, and do, happen to us day by day.

It is much the same audience that the cinemas cater for; the most successful films are those which tell a human story—the story, say, of a man or a woman's life.

Thirty-odd years of popular journalism have brought me into close touch with hundreds of people who have been much in the public eye. I have met most of the famous politicians of my time. During the years I was in that old Fleet Street backwater, Clifford's Inn—since demolished, alas—there also came my way a pic-

turesque procession of men and women whose lives had been ones of intense tragedy and romance.

I knew, for instance, a real, live duchess, who from a humble position in a West End theatre married into the peerage, and then found herself in a more exalted sphere of life when she was addressed as Your Grace. That was a story if you like—a quaint mixture well-nigh inconceivable in a sedate country like England.

I have known most of the get-rich-quick company promoters of the last generation, men who have risen from nothing to staggering wealth, and then just as suddenly collapsed into the obscurity that was originally theirs, cases of “clogs to clogs”, as they put it in Lancashire.

Then, again, there was the real underworld, the criminals of both sexes who will be with us in one form or another until, perhaps, the millennium arrives. They can be roughly divided into two classes—the incorrigibles and the beginners. Humane treatment of the latter category has been of inestimable benefit to the community in recent years. Many a time I have seen a judge who in the olden days would have sentenced an old lag to a term of penal servitude without the slightest compunction, now pause and remark: “Well, you don’t seem to have been given much chance, I’m going to bind you over, on condition that you give me your promise that you never come here again.” A welcome change, indeed, from those direful days when a barrister said to the famous Sir Peter Edlin at the Middlesex Sessions: “Does your lordship not think it possible that a man can stand in that dock and still be innocent?”

It has also been my fortune to meet innumerable people connected with the secret services of the different nations—spies, if you will—whose exploits were interesting indeed to one, like myself, always on the search for an arresting story.

Nor must the sporting world be forgotten, for it, also, is rich in romance and colour. Many of the famous figures of the Turf have been well-known to me, men who, in their prime, bore names that were household words. The Turf, I am afraid, is a somewhat sedate institution compared with what it used to be. The big gambler is almost a memory of the past, as are the great owners who used to race regardless of expense. They belonged to an age richer in personalities than the present, and the money they could once afford to spend no longer remains at their disposal.

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS "DOWN UNDER" AND IN LONDON

"So *this* is London!" I said to myself, standing in Piccadilly Circus one night in March 1911.

It looked good to Colonial eyes. The endless traffic whirled and swirled around me; the theatres were just opening, and streams of expensively-dressed women with their attendant male folk demonstrated that this was the hub of the fashionable world.

I've seen a few big cities since; none can compare with what we Australians call the Big Smoke. Every time I have returned to London from a visit abroad the same impression has been with me, that for solid wealth, beautiful women, luxurious shops and a tolerant outlook on life generally, you can't beat the real capital of civilization.

You can't call it cosmopolitan, as you can, or could, Paris. But in 1911 there were certainly many foreign colonies in London—French, Italian, Swiss and German, with a leavening of the Oriental races, such as the Japanese, who came here to learn all we could teach them. We had Russian anarchists in plenty; there had been a few of them involved in those sensational Houndsditch crimes when Winston Churchill, as Home Secretary, supervised the shooting-up of the desperadoes led by the notorious Peter the Painter.

The old London glittered much more attractively than it does to-day. Leicester Square was at the height of its raffish reputation; the *demi-monde* had its quota of languorous ladies from the Continent who competed strongly and successfully with their English rivals. The Empire and the Alhambra could still boast their promenades; the Leicester Lounge still catered for its clientèle of West Enders and the lights o' love who sought their custom.

Half-past twelve was closing time; from the Café de l'Europe and the Provence in Leicester Square there poured a mixed stream of humanity speaking half the languages of the earth, jostling each other on the crowded pavements, the

while peripatetic hansom cabs and growlers crawled by in the search for fares.

The music-halls emptied about midnight; you could visit half a dozen of them within easy hail of Piccadilly. Lights of other nights! Gone, apparently for ever, are the Oxford, the Tivoli, and the Empire. The Coliseum, the Hippodrome, the Palladium, all comparatively new in those times, have swung over to modern revue, musical comedy and straight plays. Daly's, for so long the home of the famous George Edwardes, is now a picture-house; the Gaiety's old-time days are done.

You could look down a variety bill of 1911 and realize now, if not then, how many stars they gave you for your money. George Robey, Harry Lauder, Vesta Tilley, Little Tich, Paul Cinquevalli, Marie Lloyd and many more, would make you open your eyes if you could see them in the West End to-day. I fear me they are a race gone, never to return.

Pictures were more or less unheard of; there were just a few little cinemas sprinkled around the back streets.

We had a Liberal Government in power, presided over by Mr. Asquith, with Mr. Lloyd George as his first lieutenant in the capacity of Chancellor of the Exchequer. At the time I hit the capital of the Empire, there was vast agitation going on about "L.G.'s" National Health Insurance Act, enlivened by cartoons depicting duchesses angrily asking: "What, me lick stamps?" However, I dare say they've got used to it by now, even though I often wonder whether this much-vaunted piece of social legislation has achieved many of the miracles that were prophesied for it.

It is on all-fours with another political measure which was disturbing the peace of mind of our politicians in 1911—Votes for Women. Having had twenty years to judge the effects of women's suffrage, one is inclined to think that the result is more or less negligible. Women will always be women, despite all the Mrs. Pankhursts, Drummonds, Despards and other fearsome females who scared the lives out of everybody they tackled.

I got to know some of these ladies not long afterwards; they used to come down to Fleet Street and woe betide you once you ventured to contradict them.

But 1911 was a memorable period for other reasons than

these; it was the Coronation year of King George V, and London when I arrived on the scene was fast filling up with notabilities and notorieties from all over that Empire of ours on which the sun never sets.

Preliminarily, I had the privilege of clapping eyes on H.I.M. the German Emperor and little did I think, as I saw him casting arrogant eyes on the London public as he drove slowly through Grosvenor Gardens in an open carriage, that some eighteen or nineteen years later I should be walking through his palaces at Potsdam, with the gentleman who once had the duty of guarding his sacred person telling me all about him.

That was indeed a story which created some little stir, the confessions of Gustav Steinhauer, the master spy of the Kaiser.

London was also stirred to its vitals just then by another pressing problem, domestic, it is true, but none the less important, whether or not we should hang one Stinie Morrison for the killing of an aged Jew on Clapham Common. That, also, came to concern me to some degree, for I brought out the Memoirs of the lawyer who defended this much-debated murderer, in addition to the biography of the famous Treasury counsel who prosecuted him, the late Sir Richard Muir.

A couple of months following my descent on London, I watched Mr. J. B. Joel's colt Sunstar win a sensational Derby and if anyone had told me that in a few years to come I should be staying at the South African millionaire's mansion in Hertfordshire hearing all about Sunstar, I should have uttered a derisive denial.

Yet such things came to pass.

I was born on the Pacific Coast of New South Wales in the year 1888, just outside Sydney, with little to do in early boyhood days but run about barefooted on vast beaches and reefs, days interspersed with a certain amount of compulsory education. Lessons came hard to me; there was infinitely more amusement to be got out of helping to haul in sharks and hunt for octopuses than sitting down in a sweltering schoolroom learning the three R's.

The reefs all around Bondi and Coogee where I spent my

early childhood were alive with all manner of fascinating denizens of the sea. You could swim in the cool deep pools to your heart's content and take immense delight in the breakers that washed over you, to say nothing of the possibilities of being carried right out to sea with only the chance of an incoming comber to save you, a fate which has thrice overtaken me. Clinging to the cliffs which surmounted these reefs were hundreds of millions of rock oysters, scorned by us as children. Civilization, alas, has completely killed this once idyllic spot. Bondi is now a popular holiday resort, and where once a few houses dotted the landscape, there are now thousands.

Sydney itself was growing fast, though its streets were utterly defiled with the steam trams which belched and bellowed their way out of the narrow thoroughfares into the suburbs. Horse-trams also existed, as did knife-board buses and a few cable-cars. It all sounds primitive enough these times, if good enough then.

Food was dirt cheap. You could take the sulky out on a Saturday night and drive into Paddy's market, the main meat depot of Sydney, where half a sheep could be bought for eighteen pence. Yes, one and sixpence, my friends, provided you took it home with you. But that was before the days of the refrigerated ships, when sheep were raised for nothing but the wool and the hide, and the people of England had hardly heard of such a thing as frozen mutton. Not that they would have lost much if they never had!

Fruit was equally cheap. Peaches, pears, grapes and apricots were three half-pence or twopence a pound. Fiji and Queensland bananas twopence a dozen. A forty-pound case of tomatoes, bought in mid-summer when they were ripening fast, cost the enormous sum of ninepence!

But all this has changed, and for the worse. The big squatters, with their sheep stations of a million or more acres, gradually went out of business under the influence of the droughts. Loan and mortgage companies acquired their properties and much that was so picturesque in Australia's early life began to vanish. You could still run across many aborigines in the cities, though they, too, were becoming a declining quantity as civilization marched on.

There were rabbits unlimited, millions of them, vermin

in Colonial eyes, which played havoc with the wheat crops. I recollect the Commonwealth Government bringing out a German bacteriologist, one Dr. Koch, for the purpose of exterminating them *en masse*. He was given an island in Spencer's Gulf, South Australia, with a few thousand rodents, to see what he could do with a germ which would put an end to the pest. But he never succeeded; it was not until rabbit-trapping became a profitable national industry, consequent upon the sale of the skins for making felt hats, not to mention shipping the congealed carcases to the Homeland, that Brer Rabbit began to take a back seat. I have seen rabbits in Western Australia moving across country in a swarm five miles wide. They ruined half the agricultural industry in the land of sin, sand and sorrow before the government, at fabulous expense, built 3,000 miles of rabbit-proof fencing to keep them out.

Much of what I am referring to existed before the different colonies became federated. Each of them—they had not yet acquired the dignity of terming themselves States—had tariffs of its own. If you wanted to import goods from New South Wales into Victoria, you had to pay duties, as you had with all the six colonies which afterwards became the Commonwealth of Australia. The Cornstalks and the Gumsuckers, as they are called, had also, with true British independence, built railways of different gauges. If you were desirous of travelling from Sydney to Melbourne, or vice versa, you changed trains at a place called Albury on the border..

That outlook also applied to the question of agreeing to a capital city when the Commonwealth became an accomplished fact. Sydney wouldn't agree to Melbourne, and Melbourne refused to look at Sydney. There was nothing against either of them. Sydney, with all its great historical associations and magnificent harbour, was in many ways the ideal place; it could also claim to be much the older. Modern Melbourne, beautifully laid-out, with ready-made Houses of Parliament, a most spacious Government House and some of the finest streets in the world, could certainly say that it had the better right to be the capital on æsthetic grounds. A clear case of "How happy could I be with either, were t'other dear charmer away".

So, as neither state nor statesmen would give way, they decided to build themselves a capital of their own and chose an out-of-the-way place called Canberra in the southern Districts of New South Wales, almost half-way between Sydney and Melbourne. Sounds silly, doesn't it? Members of the Federal Parliament now spend half their time travelling to and from Canberra; I hate to think of the horrible language it entails.

However, Federation was only a dream in the days of my youth; it was the year 1901 when the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, whose Coronation procession I was to witness in London ten years later, came out in the Orient liner *Ophir*, to open the Federal Houses of Parliament. I saw them driving over Princes Bridge, Melbourne, *en route* from Government House down the St. Kilda Road, the Duchess sitting bolt upright, our future and well-beloved King with a nose slightly reddened by the keen wind that was blowing up the river Yarra from the sea.

Nothing but a smudge also on the horizon was the Japanese menace, now unhappily come to fruition. The White Australia policy, spasmodically enforced by the different colonies, became an active measure when the hare-lipped Sir Edmund Barton, the first Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, assumed office, and not before it was time. A highly undesirable class of Chinese, as well as Japanese, were fast making a Tom Tiddler's ground of the Antipodes, what with their opium dens, pak-a-pu joints and other evils. The Japanese were even worse. The coastal towns of Queensland and Western Australia were overrun with their brothels.

Melbourne boasted, or, I should say, suffered a noisome Chinese quarter which smelt high unto heaven; to walk into Little Bourke Street, where most of these Celestials congregated, was like entering another world. The Australians had no objection to the hard-working Chinese laundrymen and market-gardeners; it was the riff-raff that were not wanted.

However, White Australia did not discriminate in these matters. The P. & O. liners, carrying Lascar firemen, were equally severely dealt with if any of their coloured crews deserted. A fine of £100 for each man missing awaited the Company.

Odd things remain in one's memory. I recollect a Governor of New South Wales in the 'nineties, Earl Beauchamp to wit, achieving much notoriety by giving what came to be known as the seidlitz powder ball.

His Excellency was very young for this onerous post, no more than about twenty-seven. For this particular soirée he issued two kinds of tickets; the Upper ten had a blue one, the common herd a white. Never was there such an uproar! There was also kindly old Lord Brassey, of the yacht *Sunbeam* fame, who didn't quite know what a Governor should do. He officiated in Victoria, a typical Victorian gentleman, portly, side-whiskered, rubicund of face, and he gave every year at Government House a gigantic tea-party to thousands of school-children.

Years afterwards in London I came to know a good many of the men who went out to Australia as Governors. I was then engaged in the London office of the Sydney *Sun* and discovered that the Colonial Office encountered innumerable difficulties in finding suitable men for these posts. A private income was almost indispensable; the £5,000 a year that the job carried, barely saw it through.

One of these days, and perhaps in the not-distant future, Australia will appoint all its own Governors from among the native-born eligibles. It has already been done, if only temporarily, in the case of Sir Isaac Isaacs, the Chief Justice of the Commonwealth, who became Governor-General at the time of the terrible financial slump which hit Australia like a cyclone some fifteen years ago. South Africa has since followed suit, in the person of Sir Patrick Duncan, who died on July 17, 1943, and I shall be vastly surprised if the principle is not adopted in perpetuity sooner or later. The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester have now gone out to Australia and after that, it remains to be seen what will happen in the years that lie immediately before us.

Sport, I am afraid, claimed my attention from an unduly early age. I can remember the English and Australian cricket teams of the middle 'nineties, when cricket *was* cricket and not the money-making racket it is to-day. Well do I recollect the immortal Ranji collecting 175 of the best on the Sydney ground, his famous silk shirt ballooning out

in the stiff breeze blowing across from the Pacific Ocean. Tom Richardson also, he of the curly black locks, who could bowl all day.

Vic Trumper's graceful figure lingers in my mind; I am still of the opinion that he is the greatest batsman the world has ever known. They didn't have the marvellously-doped wickets that are common these days. M. A. Noble, little Sid Gregory, old Jim Kelly the wicket-keeper, were other players I knew as a boy.

I have recollections of another stirring spectacle, a regiment of the New South Wales Lancers going off to the Sudanese War of 1897, the first Colonial troops, I believe, to be sent overseas. What a sight they were as they rode through the streets of Sydney, their red-and-white pennons flying, every man of them riding a picked horse! The same little war, strange to say, where Winston Churchill first made a name for himself.

I also contracted another complaint young in life, a love of the Turf. Our family lived for some time at Randwick, close to the big racecourse which is the headquarters of the Australian Jockey Club. Here, seated on a fence, by the good graces of a rich bookmaker who had a house overlooking the course, I saw hundreds of races.

A few miles across the bush were Botany Bay and La Perouse, whither we were wont to tramp knowing nothing of all their past history. The bush and the beach were all that interested us.

Happy days indeed! As you grow older, you realize that childhood is the best time of your life, something that can never be replaced. The free-and-easy existence that was the common lot in Australia made boyhood days an ideal which few countries can offer. There was no such thing as "trespassers will be prosecuted"; no one to say you nay if you desired to picnic out in the bush.

A good deal of financial misfortune had overtaken my mother's family. In the normal course of events she would have been a rich woman. Her father, Christopher Smith, was about the biggest iron merchant in the Southern Hemisphere. But foolishly the old man got caught up in the tremendous and insane gambling in land which took place in Melbourne when the Queen City of the South was being

built. It was a boom which ultimately ruined half the banks in Australia, as is still well-remembered. I know it cost my grandfather £300,000 and although he carried on his business right up to the time of his death, he was a broken man, physically as well as mentally.

So the time came, and all too soon, when I had to set about earning my own living. I was apprenticed to a firm of manufacturing chemists and stayed at it long enough to know now, if not then, what a fool I was to have thrown it up. Newspapers teach you the money that is in patent medicines; look at the advertisement columns.

We were then in Melbourne, which had grown like magic since the middle 'eighties. Humdrum business made no appeal to me whatever and in 1905 I went over to Western Australia, where I had relatives. Here I spent three and a half years, a time enlivened more by sport and pleasure than hard work. I started dabbling in journalism, writing on cricket and billiards, two games at which I could account myself a bit of a dabster. I played the latter game a good deal with Fred Lindrum, who at seventeen years of age became the open champion of Australia. Many people will recollect him when he arrived in England in 1913, to make hacks of everybody he met.

John Roberts, I may say, was matched with young Lindrum on a visit "Down Under". The "Old Man", as everybody knew him, barked out: "What! Play that boy! Give him six thousand in sixteen to make a game of it."

One regrets to record that the "Old Man" got beaten by exactly double the start he had bestowed upon his boyish opponent. Fred Lindrum is the uncle of the Walter Lindrum who has since made all other billiard players look foolish. The first time I saw Walter play in England, he made a break of 1,750 with his opening shot!

I was also bowling fairly well in those days, a leg-break which earned me a place in senior cricket. What with horse-racing, yachting, swimming and fishing, I hadn't much time for hard labour. Still, those were the golden days of our youth, when all the world seemed bright and care was far away.

Perth, the capital of Western Australia, I found a lively little place of some fifty or sixty thousand inhabitants, most of them of a sporting turn of mind. It boasted four news-

papers, two mornings, one evening, one Sunday. The latter, a pink sheet called the *Sunday Times*, was by far the brightest organ of the quartette. At twopence a time it tickled the locals up to no uncertain tune, the genius-in-chief being one "Dryblower" Murphy.

Dryblowing, for the benefit of the uninitiated, is a crude process of extracting gold from river beds supposed to be auriferous. The sand is blown away, leaving the gold, if any. Mr. Murphy, who deserves a special niche in that temple of fame to which most of us aspire, was an auburn-haired, ruddy-faced little Irishman—as his name denotes—who made it his business to extract gold from the human dross around him. He told the truth with a pen that at times fairly sizzled.

In Perth those days was another Hibernian to whom Mr. Murphy had taken a particular dislike—Mr. P. A. Connolly, a rich publican who owned many racehorses. One year, in the Railway Stakes, a big handicap run on Boxing Day, Mr. Connolly had two horses which were the subject of much speculation—Blue Spec and Czarevitch. Nobody knew which was the "pea", though Blue Spec was a hot favourite on form, as well as with the bookmakers.

But the 20 to 1 chance Czarevitch did the trick, amidst terrific booing from the assembled multitude. The *Sunday Times* came out with a long and lurid account of the ramp that was supposed to have been worked; you never read such an indictment. Mr. Connolly—long since gathered to his fathers, bless his soul—promptly countered with a writ for libel, claiming heavy damages. He didn't win; after a four days' hearing, the *Sunday Times* got the verdict, and they proceeded to celebrate the event in no uncertain manner. They chartered all the Perth electric trams for the night, had them all specially illuminated and, what was of greater interest to the male population, installed a bar in each tram, with all drinks on the *Sunday Times*. Fancy that happening in London!

Blue Spec, I might add, was a pretty good horse. He afterwards won the Melbourne Cup for his noble owner, ridden by the Anglo-Australian jockey Frank Bullock, whose father was a mounted policeman in Victoria. Bullock, one of the best horsemen I have ever known, and the straightest

as well, subsequently came to Europe. He was first jockey to the Imperial Gradiitz Stud in Germany and in that capacity had the felicity of knowing the Kaiser. With the arrival of the Great War, he got over to England and rode, as Ruff's Guide proves, hundreds of big winners for some of our best owners. He was first jockey for Mr. Alec Taylor at Manton, though, like his fellow-countryman Brownie Carslake, he never won the Derby.

Racing in the wild and woolly west could be a bit sultry now and again. I had a small job myself at some pony meetings which were conducted close to Fremantle. I was Clerk of the Course, at two guineas a day and what I could make. On one notable occasion, with the favourite for the big event of the day going very badly in the betting, the Stewards—also the proprietors, be it explained—sent for the jockey.

"Your mount is going badly in the market."

"I can't help that, sir."

"Can't you? Well, you'll win this race, otherwise you go off for good."

The favourite won, pulling up; I never saw a jockey in such a hurry.

But the best morsel that ever came my way—and there were many in that unconventional land—took place over a wrestling match which was scheduled to come off at the brand-new theatre just built in Hay Street by the famous Tom Molloy, Mayor of Perth. It was called His Majesty's, and it had a big hotel built around and about it, conducted by one Patrick Daley.

This was a match for real money: none of your cheques with strings attached. The contestants thereof were Bert Woods, an Englishman who came a-touring "down under" with George Hackenschmidt, still alive in our memories as the "Russian Lion". They had split sticks over something, probably because the public couldn't see much fun in the same two men always wrestling each other; anyhow, Woods turned up in Perth looking for a few bouts.

At the main fire-station in the capital they had just the fellow to oblige him, an enormous, ginger-haired Scotsman named George Dinnie. Some of the old-timers will remember Dinnie's father, Donald of that ilk, who was a

celebrated figure at Highland games in his heyday. This George Dinnie—there was 18 stone of him—had the greatest biceps I have ever seen on a man; he also had a bristly red moustache which seemed to fairly crackle when the spirit of combat was strong within him. The match was for £350 a side, the stakeholder being the Sporting Editor of the *West Australian*. I accompanied him; we lived at the same hash foundry.

A vast crowd awaited the gladiators, with bottles of beer procured from the bars outside to while away the waiting. Punctually at nine p.m. the stage was taken by the two men, with a referee who looked much too small and mild for such a formidable task. It was catch-as-catch-can, the best two out of three falls. Down below in the orchestra pit, the musicians who had been discoursing sweet strains laid down their instruments and eagerly turned their faces upwards.

But sad to say, this classic encounter proved unworthy of its luxurious setting. No sooner had the men got to holtz, than Dinnie picked Woods up and, as though he were a baby, flung him with one mighty heave right on top of the orchestra, knocking out in the process the conductor, the first and second fiddles, and the bassoon. He also did Woods no good.

Talk about Bedlam! Everybody went raving mad. Half a dozen free fights broke out among the audience. Some were for despatching Dinnie forthwith as a murderer; others, of a more sanguinary nature, were yelling for Woods to get back on the stage and give them their money's worth. In about half an hour something like order was restored; a much battered and bruised Woods was got back into the ring, where his seconds claimed the first fall on a foul.

This, after more fierce argument which looked like provoking real murder from Dinnie, was granted by the bewildered referee. Everybody settled down to what would now be real blood. But here Woods, and small blame to him, took a hand for the first time. He wouldn't go on with the match.

This fact gradually coming home to the shouting spectators, the real uproar broke out. Beer bottles came flying down on the stage; Dinnie's seconds, and Dinnie himself in no uncertain voice, claimed the match. The referee didn't

know what to do; whatever happened, he looked like losing his life. In the midst of all this turmoil, we heard a Scottish voice, hoarse with anger, demanding to know: "Whaur's the felly wi' the money?"

"That means us," said the Sporting Editor. "We'd better be off while the going's good."

We couldn't fight our way through the surging crowd; it had got right down to the footlights. Quickly as possible, we sneaked through the orchestra pit, underneath the stage, and thence out the stage door into St. George's Terrace, where we wasted no time in reaching the *West Australian* office. About midnight, Dinnie and his supporters arrived; the Sporting Editor had wisely gone home.

I've never sorted out the rights and wrongs of this memorable episode. All I know is that Dinnie's backer subsequently brought an action in the courts to recover the amount involved; what is more, he won. The moral is, don't diddle a Scotsman out of his just dues.

We had a regular spate of professional wrestling in Australia for a few years. Harry Rickards, an ex-London comedian who owned a number of halls, following the lead of the inimitable Charles B. Cochran in London, brought out not only Hackenschmidt—easily the king of them all—but also Eugene Sandow, Tom Carkeek, the Cornish wrestler, and several others. Sandow was a magnificent-looking fellow, with the physique of a Greek god and amiable to a degree. He couldn't hold a candle to men like Hackenschmidt as a wrestler, but he certainly appealed to the ladies. He had a bout or two with Australia's champion, the tall, handsome Clarence Weber, whose figure was, if possible, even more perfect than Sandow's.

Hackenschmidt, a nice, agreeable sort of fellow, I saw wrestle two Indians one night in the Melbourne Exhibition building. Their names were Gunga Brahm and Buttan Singh; they were billed as the Court wrestlers to the Rajah of Something. The best thing about them were the ornate dressing-gowns they took off, and speedily put on again, when they entered the ring. "Hack" just picked them and threw them away. He was about fifteen and a half stone, a mass of muscle from head to toe, and like a cat on his feet. When he went over to the States to wrestle Eddie

"Strangler" Gotch, the champion of America, he got beaten with what was known as a toe-hold, something he had never experienced before.

Another highlight in the West was the visit of A. O. Jones's M.C.C. team of 1907, memorable for the first visit of Jack Hobbs, and Sydney Barnes, the best bowler I have ever seen in my life. They were a bright and breezy lot of lads, this team, with Jonah himself well in the forefront. I played him a billiards match at the amateur Sports Club in Perth; his skill with the cue was almost on a par with his abilities as a batsman and slip-field.

One way and another, they were a fairly good side, even though they failed to win the Ashes. They stayed at the Palace Hotel on St. George's Terrace, where the proprietor, one J. M. Glowrey, a member of the Legislative Council and therefore a person of some little consequence, kept in the vestibule a fine statue of the Brown Venus. One or two of Jonah's boys, I regret to say, treated the lady with much disrespect; they decorated her in a manner hardly becoming to the eyes of the modest-minded.

For a brief period of my life in the Golden West, I worked in a bank—the National Bank of Australasia to be precise, manager H. R. England, one of the old school with a fondness for writing notes of this type:

Procrastination and dilatoriness on the part of the signing officers will one day involve this bank in an action for heavy damages. It is therefore requested that all possible promptitude be observed in attending to clients, whatever their status in life.

There was a story behind this. The National kept the account for the Government Treasurer, and in that capacity paid the salaries of the M.L.A.'s—members of the Legislative Assembly. They got £200 a year, Western Australia being the first country in the world, I believe, to concede the fact that being an M.P. is an expensive business, especially in a country like Australia, where the travelling is terrific.

These M.L.A.'s used to come bursting into the bank like a lot of schoolboys with their monthly cheques for £16 13s. 4d. The cheques had to be certified before the cashier would pay them and as nobody on the ledgers liked Labour politics,

they kept the poor fellows waiting as long as they could. Hence the note.

The National Bank did a colossal business in gold; it was the agent for some of the biggest and richest mines in the West. Vast shipments of gold came from Kalgoorlie, Boulder City, Kanowna and White Feather. The first time I handled a real gold brick—not one of the con men's brand—I was flabbergasted by its weight. It lay in a box, smaller than an ordinary brick, but when I tried to lift it out, I found it just couldn't be done with one hand. It weighed over a hundred pounds. Occasionally we got small parcels of alluvial gold and dust, the gleanings of the poor fossickers and dryblowers who spent laborious days roaming around to find a speck or two. You would get a bottle filled with dust and say to yourself: "Here's a human story." God only knows how many broken men had slowly and painfully made their way up to the diggings in the early days of the gold rush, either to be frozen out or cheated of their claims, until they were reduced to packing up a swag and tramping hundreds of miles looking for a living.

Coolgardie, when I saw it, was almost worked out; and believe me, there's nothing so desolate in life as a semi-dilapidated mining town. Kalgoorlie was also dying away; all the real gold was now being taken from the Golden Mile running into Boulder City. Tremendous heaps of old crushings were to be seen everywhere; they are called tailings, and since gold has doubled in price, it has been found profitable to put them through the cyanide process again. Kalgoorlie was originally Hannan's Reward; the man who found it saw millions of pounds pass into the possession of London company promoters.

None of these rich goldfields could ever have been developed had it not been for the enterprise of that great pioneer of Empire, the late Sir John Forrest. If hardly such a spectacular figure as Cecil Rhodes, he could be accounted a big man in every sense of the word. I frequently saw him around Perth; he had deserted State politics for the Federal House and was at one time the Treasurer of the Commonwealth Government. Once seen, he could never be forgotten, with his deeply-lined, weather-beaten face, straggly beard and thick-set figure.

Big John, as everybody affectionately knew him, was the man in the early 'nineties who pushed through the expensive project for taking water to the fields. A pipe-line costing two million pounds was run from the Mundaring Ranges outside Perth to Coolgardie, and then Kalgoorlie, a distance of nearly 400 miles. It follows the railway and is a subject that one of these fine days a British film company will depict. I fancy the old man didn't hit it at all well in the Federal Parliament; he was certainly very dictatorial. He died on his way to England in 1918, at Sierra Leone, if my memory serves me right, and I had the privilege of writing a biography of this historic figure for the *Weekly Dispatch*. Very few people in London had ever heard of him. As Kipling truly put it: "What do they know of England, who only England know."

He was created a peer before he died, the only Australian to be so honoured. They won't have hereditary titles "down under".

Western Australia, producing as it did three-quarters of the Commonwealth's gold, possessed a Mint second to none. I have known occasions in the National Bank when we had to pack £2,000,000 worth of sovereigns for shipment to India. With regret it must be recorded that there were no pickings for the staff from this fabulous fortune. We were locked in a room with the chief cashier weighing the sovereigns back from the canvas bags in which they came from the Mint, five thousand in each. They were then packed in strong wooden boxes filled with sawdust, screwed down, and then sealed.

Lorries pulled up outside in St. George's Terrace and with an armed escort the gold was taken down to Fremantle, to be carried by mail steamer to Colombo, and thence transhipped to Calcutta. The biggest thing of its kind I ever experienced was a shipment of £5,000,000 in specie to India, the accumulation of three of the Perth banks. It all went in one steamer! What a chance for a pirate!

Some of the artful Chinese, not so simple as they looked, would often cash cheques running into thousands of pounds for which they demanded gold. They used to "sweat" the sovereigns, in other words, shake them up and down in a bag for hours at a time to break little pieces off the newly-

milled edges. It was a serious criminal offence, but difficult to detect.

Western Australia is a country immensely rich in many things other than minerals. In the southern regions are to be found great tracts of fruit-growing country, where grapes, peaches, pears, apples and apricots are produced with little effort.

The climate in these regions is well-nigh perfect, with an abundant rainfall. Land is cheap, but labour dear and difficult. The real stumbling-block, however, as in many other parts of Australia, is the lack of skilled labour and the problem of finding a profitable market for perishable products. The West is too far away from England to make it worth while to ship fruit in a fresh condition, as is done by the South African growers.

Worse still, the fruit-canning industry in Australia generally is still in its infancy and I doubt whether it will ever be properly developed until the Commonwealth Government embarks on the project, backed by a big advertising campaign. It is sheer nonsense, of course, that the Californian growers should possess a monopoly of this large and lucrative trade. The British Empire can produce all the fruit it requires, and more, a state of affairs which also applies to butter, cheese, bacon, ham and everything else that we used to import from foreign countries.

In my boyhood days there existed in Victoria and New South Wales splendid co-operative butter factories, which went out of business, even with State subsidies, simply because there were no facilities for sending the butter to England. New Zealand was in the same predicament. As the present war has conclusively demonstrated, our Dominions can keep us well supplied with everything we require in the way of dairy produce, and there is no reason why this policy should not be permanently maintained.

It is also good political economy to spend our money with our own kith and kin and not with people like the Danes, whose behaviour under German pressure has hardly indicated any pronounced pro-British tendencies.

In Western Australia, again, there are vast tracts of timber-growing territory whose possibilities are not even

remotely realized. Unrivalled hard woods, such as karri and jarrah, are to be found in seemingly illimitable quantities. There is a certain market for the latter as street paving; but even then, this magnificent red wood is barely known to the world at large.

For many years Australia has grossly neglected the untold riches of the meat-canning market. The Chicago packers dominate the field, why, I could never understand. It is true that the Commonwealth firms have hardly made a serious effort to obtain their share of the millions of pounds that are involved in this lucrative trade. Their methods are crude and amateurish alongside the American; they have no money to advertise their wares and the spasmodic attempts which have been made to find English buyers have always failed.

But that is largely because they have never created a demand for their goods; they have neither the money, nor the advertising knowledge, to sell their products in the clever fashion practised by the Chicago millionaires.

Large quantities of Australian jam are sold in England every year, much of it in the form of apple pulp which comes from Tasmania. But it goes into the shops with an English label; the Australian jam manufacturers are hardly known by their names in the British Isles.

Something will have to be done for the Dominions after this war is over. They will be saddled with colossal war debts which will impoverish them for generations to come and if they are to continue to buy British goods, there must be a reciprocal exchange of commodities which will enable them to pay their way. Australia, for instance, looks like having a National Debt of two thousand million pounds, which is an impossible burden for a young country to carry.

CHAPTER II

FROM "SIN, SAND AND SORROW" TO GRUB STREET

I COULD write a book telling of my time in this land of "sin, sand and sorrow", so called because all three surrounded you, especially when you got outside Perth.

The most sensational episode of all was the famous Broome pearl robbery, which caused the deaths of six men. Broome is a township on the north-west coast of Western Australia and the biggest pearl port in the Southern Seas. The Japanese still have their eye on it, and numbers of their spies were living there for years. Japanese brothels and stores flourished in this outpost of civilization, where the heat almost cut you in two as it shimmered down on the galvanized iron roofs.

You went up to Broome by steamer, calling *en route* at numbers of other small places where cargo was dropped, and picked up on the return journey. It took three weeks, and, believe me, you were worn out by the time you dropped anchor a couple of miles offshore. There was no harbour; when low tide came, you found the steamer lying on her side in the mud. The tide rose and fell forty feet!

There made this trip regularly a man from Perth who was generally believed to be a clothing traveller. No doubt he did do a certain amount of legitimate business, if only as an alibi. But his real game was buying stolen pearls from the crews of the luggers that sailed out of Broome, men who could be accounted the toughest and roughest in creation. Malays, Cingalese, Japanese, Chinese, Manilamen and heaven knows how many other races manned the luggers and the poor owners were everlastinglly at their wits' end to stop them thieving. A pearl is the easiest thing in the world to hide; these fellows would push them up their noses, and various other parts of their anatomy, until the only way the traffic could be stopped was to catch the receivers.

One fine morning there was found on Broome beach the dead body of this Perth clothing traveller. He was no pretty sight; the killers had battered his head in with a heavy glass lemonade bottle, rifled his pockets, and disappeared without the slightest clue to betray them. However, Broome is a small place; in a few hours the local police got news of the disappearance of five men from one of the pearl luggers —two Malays, a Cingalese, a Japanese and a Manilaman.

It required no Sherlock Holmes to surmise the fate that had overtaken the dead man. He was well-known as a buyer of stolen pearls and obviously had gone down to the beach to have a deal with some of the thieves. It must have been a

fairly substantial one; it came to light later on that he had arrived in Broome with £500 in his possession and on the night he was murdered he carried a large number of other pearls bought from various sources.

The mounted police were called out, reinforced by black trackers. Three weeks elapsed before any trace of the runaways could be found. They had struck south, evidently hoping to reach one of the inland towns.

After hunting them three weeks, the police found two dead bodies lying in the remains of a roughly-made camp, with a fire still smouldering. They were the Japanese and the Manilaman, each with a Malay *kris* stuck in his back. Seemingly they had been despatched while sleeping and the police pushed on, confident now that their prey could not be far distant.

So it proved; the following morning they came up with the remaining three, so utterly exhausted that they must soon have died of thirst. The Cingalese told all that had happened, hoping to save his neck. It was three or four months later before they appeared in the Central Criminal Court at Perth to be tried for their lives. Sentence of death was passed on all three; I was in Perth when they were hanged in Fremantle Gaol, a touch of horror being added to the occasion when the Chief Warden fell into the pit as the bodies were swung into eternity.

Walking along St. George's Terrace, Perth, of a morning you could frequently see a plump little man with side-whiskers gazing benignly upon the passers-by. His name was Sam Copley and he looked anything but the millionaire he was. Mr. Copley had a wonderful life story, which he related with no false modesty. He had been a barber in Huddersfield as a young man, and had emigrated to the Golden West in the middle 'eighties, to open a hairdressing shop in Fremantle. That little enterprise he aided by "making a book", so profitably that he migrated to Perth and began buying property. One thing led to another. At the time I made his acquaintance, he was the holder of no less than 11,000,000 acres of land in the north-west of the Colony! He did not own it outright; it was held on a 99 years Crown lease and except for cattle-grazing in parts, its only value lay in prospective mineral rights.

Water was the real difficulty, as it was in so much of this vast tract of territory. Short of expensive artesian bores, there was none. Ten years after leaving the West myself, I ran into Sam Copley again; he was lunching with James White the millionaire, in his offices at 218 Strand, and so was I, in company with Hannen Swaffer, the Editor of the *Weekly Dispatch*. So it's a small world! I glanced round that luncheon table and reckoned the assembled plutocrats to be worth the better part of £40,000,000, Solly Joel heading the list with about £10,000,000. Who wouldn't be a journalist?

You were lucky in your travels around the West if you escaped a good dose of typhoid fever. One came my way; for six weeks I lay in a hospital, gradually going to a skeleton, racked by headaches, covered with irritating pimples, my hair coming out in handfuls. Milk was my only sustenance, until a little arrowroot made its appearance. I re-entered the world, so the physician said, with a new body, all my sins and ills completely purged. I decided to go back home to celebrate my second time on earth.

Here further misfortune befell me. Walking about when I should have been resting, I snapped a tendon in my leg, which laid me up a further two months. I eventually went over to Sydney to take a job in keeping with the family tradition; I became the manager of a department in a big store. Being on my feet ten hours a day was just purgatory in my state and when my employer, the eccentric "Sonny" Foy, suggested resignation, I didn't disagree with him. Mr. Foy, Irish as they make 'em, was one of Australia's leading characters.

I ran into another rum 'un shortly after this—Hugh D. MacIntosh, fight promoter and general entrepreneur. "Mac" had the Burns-Johnson world's championship booked; while I was in Sydney Massa Johnson arrived, as did Burns in a week's time. Burns's price was £6,000, Johnson's £2,000. The real winner was "Mac", who cleaned up £250,000 from the moving picture rights.

Neither of the contestants made themselves popular in Australia. Johnson had white women hanging around him all the time, a thing no Colonial will tolerate. Burns was what they call to-day "high-hat"; and I guess he knew when

he signed up that he stood no chance with the big nigger. Johnson had chased him all over the world for a fight; they wouldn't stand for it in America, nor in England, so it came to Sydney.

There was trouble over the referee; when the men got into the ring at the Rushcutter's Bay stadium, MacIntosh was there in his shirt-sleeves to officiate. A nastier piece of cold-blooded slaughter I never witnessed. Burns, much smaller and lighter, outclassed as a boxer, was just a chopping-block for the black man. In the fourteenth round a police inspector climbed through the ropes. "That'll do," he said to "Mac".

I came to know Hugh D. very well, especially when he arrived in England a few years later. By that time he had blossomed out; from fight promoting he had gone on to vaudeville, and then, not realizing his own limitations, bought some newspapers. He was completely out of his depth, as other and better men than he have discovered.

"Editors!" he exclaimed to me in his suite at the Savoy Hotel. "Don't talk to me about editors. They're ten a penny."

A first-class editor might have saved him. Instead, he involved himself—and he was then the Hon. H. D. MacIntosh, a member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales—in heavy speculation which completely drained his by no means limitless resources. Borrowed money availed him nothing; the time came when he left his native land and began looking for another fortune. He turned up in London about 1936 with a wonderful scheme for establishing a big chain of milk bars all over England, run on American lines.

"You'd better get into this," he advised me. "I've got Jack Joel behind me."

I knew J. B. Joel better than he did; I couldn't see that Croesus bothering his head about milk bars. Poor old "Mac" hung on for some years optimistically pursuing the rainbow; it was no good, the magic touch had gone. He died practically penniless, which is tragic when you think how fortune had once smiled on him. But he never complained; he was a game loser.

There was no money to be made writing for Australian newspapers in those days. Most of the owners were canny

Scots, to whom thrift was second nature. Old David Syme, the proprietor of the Melbourne *Age*, was the richest of them all; he left a cool million behind him when he passed out, which isn't bad for Australia. Other Scots well in evidence were Wilson and MacKinnon of the Melbourne *Argus*, the Reays of the Melbourne *Herald*, the Fairfaxes of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. As the late Mr. Justice Darling sagely observed in one of the celebrated libel actions fought out before him: "Ye canna tak the breeks off a Hielander."

However, I pottered about writing a little here and there; I even tried to get a book published, only to discover that all the books in Australia worth reading came from England. One regrets to record that the Commonwealth has never encouraged the arts. Singers, painters, writers, have all been compelled to come to England to achieve any fame. Madame Melba, who was Nellie Mitchell, the daughter of a Victorian vigneron and a great friend of my uncle W. H. Felstead, would have got nowhere in Australia; it was my uncle, I believe, who paid the expenses of the first big concert she gave in the Melbourne Town Hall. That fact did not deter the lady from uttering a few rude words on one notable occasion when I trod on the train of her dress; she was going into a Melbourne restaurant with Lord Richard Nevill, the Chamberlain to the Governor-General, apparently under the impression that she was still at Covent Garden.

Early in 1911 I took passage on a Holt Blue Funnel steamer, the S.S. *Ping Suey*, which had come off the China run to pick up a cargo of wool at lucrative rates, to catch the late sales in Europe. You get an idea of the money that is in the British Empire when I say that the remuneration for this consignment ran into £10,000. Preliminarily, however, we called at pretty little Hobart, the capital of Tasmania, for a few more odds and ends, all grist to the shipowners' mill. Then we turned our nose on the long run across the Indian Ocean, with our first stop at Suez.

An entrancing trip, this three weeks' voyage through illimitable waters with not a sail to see, nothing but calm weather, gorgeous skies at night, the ocean empty of all other traffic. Not until we reached Cape Guardafui at the bottom of the Red Sea did we meet another steamer. Past Perim and Aden we ran into blinding heat; and if you want

a real taste of purgatory, let me recommend a spell in the stokehold of a coal-burning ship in the Red Sea. We carried Chinese firemen, and as the poor wretches came up on deck for a breather I thought of the old saying that one half the world never knows how the other half lives.

Dunkirk was our first real port; we coaled at Port Said, passing through the Suez Canal so close to a big Orient liner that we could almost have reached over and shaken hands.

Going up the Bay of Biscay and into the English Channel, I began to understand what cold really meant; it was blowing a blizzard most of the time. I also saw snow for the first time in my life.

A dreary hole was Dunkirk, sordid, poverty-stricken, inhabited by the poorest class of French. I've been there many times since and come to the conclusion that when Charles II sold it back to France, we didn't lose much. By the time our wool was on the rail to Lille, I had seen as much of the place as anyone could want.

Late in the afternoon we crawled into the Royal Albert Docks and with a great sigh of relief I hopped into the train which would take me to Fenchurch Street and London.

The very first thing that hit my senses was the smell of petrol on the streets.

My first summer in England was spent pleasantly enough. I did a little journalism, one of my first successes being an interview with Mr. Andrew Fisher, the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, who had come over with his buxom wife for the Coronation. He was staying at the old Hotel Cecil in the Strand. I found him kindness personified, and one could not but admire his upright, stalwart character.

He had a life-story of intense interest, for he was one of the rebels from the outrageous conditions in the Scottish coalfields who had emigrated to Australia in the middle 'eighties, a matter of which I was to hear much more a few years later when I came to know Mr. Robert Smillie, the President of the Miners' Federation. To-day the miners are coming into their own; it wants a grave national crisis to awaken the government to the paramount importance of the coal industry.

Mr. Fisher had gone up in the world since he was a

Scottish miner earning eighteen shillings a week. He had been elected first to the Legislative Assembly in Queensland, then to the Commonwealth Parliament, and now he was Prime Minister. He took it all quite calmly, though I did notice a gleam of satisfaction in his somewhat sombre eyes as he told me he had visited the village where he had once led a strike, to be received now with brass bands and the cheers of the very people who had kicked him out. Thus does time bring its revenges! *

To ride in a State carriage in the Coronation procession of His Majesty King George V was indeed ample compensation for all that had happened in the past.

This glittering procession still remains an abiding memory; it was mightily colourful and impressive and you can realize now, if not then, that the German Emperor, who had surveyed London so contemptuously a few months previously, might well have paused to think that all this pageant of Empire meant something that would not easily be overthrown. But William II did not, of course, come to the Coronation.

An English cricket team had gone out to Australia; I found my knowledge of the game "down under" an asset readily convertible into cash. I made my journalistic débüt as a sporting writer on the old *Standard*, long since defunct, but in those times struggling along in Shoe Lane. It was then owned by Davison Dalziel, the M.P. for Brixton. However, he was not in the game for keeps; he sold out not long afterwards to Sir Alexander Henderson (later the first Lord Faringdon), the Chairman of the Great Central Railway, who soon grew weary of a paper that made no profits, and closed it down for ever.

I did fairly well writing on cricket, not only for the London papers, but also for the provincials. Australia was getting a good licking, mainly through the medium of Messrs. Hobbs, Rhodes and Barnes.

The Street of Adventure, better known as Fleet Street, was slightly more spacious than it is now. The *Standard*, the *Morning Post*, the *Morning Leader* and the *Daily Chronicle* were still alive, as were the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Globe* and the *Evening Times*. *Lloyd's News*, a paper of which I was to be offered the

editorship a few years later, still flourished with close on a million circulation. There were many weekly Bohemian organs such as the *Pink 'Un*, otherwise the *Sporting Times*, the *Winning Post*, run by the redoubtable Bob Sievier, the old *Sportsman*, and many more long since dead and gone.

They have disappeared, these papers, in the face of a development of which I shall speak further on. Fleet Street underwent revolutionary changes after the Great War.

The *Daily Herald*, born amidst the throes of a dock strike, was just starting; it has taken thirty years to establish a newspaper for which there always was a demand. Even then the venture would never have succeeded but for the intervention of a man whose career in journalism is one of the miracles of the twentieth century. I refer, of course, to Lord Southwood, with whom I may claim a long acquaintanceship.

Opposite the *Standard* offices in Shoe Lane was the *Daily Express*, then controlled by Arthur Pearson, with R. D. Bluimenfeld as his editor, a grimy, old-fashioned building with a bridge to the *Standard* across the Lane. Pearson had an interest in both. The Cadburys and the Rowntrees owned the *Daily News* (now the *News Chronicle*) and the *Star*, as they do to-day; you could also see the first Lord Burnham, a red-faced, curly-haired little man coming out from the *Daily Telegraph* offices to his waiting brougham. Popular newspapers were a halfpenny, thanks to Northcliffe, who from Carmelite House ran the *Daily Mail*, *Evening News* and *Weekly Dispatch*. And *The Times* was still in the possession of the Walter family, with the aristocratic staff little dreaming that one day in the near future they would be working for the very man who represented all they despised in modern journalism.

These early days of mine in Fleet Street were rich in experience and often I congratulated myself that I had acquired a fairly considerable knowledge of sport. That proficiency at billiards which Herbert Spencer declared to be the sign of a misspent youth, turned out useful after all. For quite a long time I wrote extensively on the game and in that capacity came to know all the leading players. Roberts, Stevenson, Inman, Diggle, Reece, Dawson, George Gray, Harverson, and practically all of them were bread and butter

to me, as were those who came along a little later—Willie Smith, Tom Newman, Joe Davis, Claude Falkiner.

Billiards has died away in public favour in recent years, more's the pity. The cause is not far to seek. Other distractions came along; the tied-house evil was also partly responsible, for tenant publicans could no longer afford to keep billiard rooms. Additionally—and I have frequently told this to the professionals—they have made the game look too easy. My countryman, George Gray, started this rot; when he arrived in England and began making thousand breaks at will, billiards looked simple. Still, the public soon tired of him; he was too monotonous to watch for long.

London was sportier then, if I may use the word, than it is now. Famous figures in English life would come into Burroughes and Watts, as well as Thurston's in Leicester Square, to watch the imitable Stevenson at work; my old friend Tom Reece could still go to the Marlborough Club to play before the King. Stevenson, for grace and style, has never known a rival.

I accounted it an honour to meet another man who surely belongs to the immortals—C. B. Fry. He was still running his magazine and when I called on him I found a handsome, upstanding fellow who stood with his back to the fire and laid down the law about cricket long and entertainingly.

All these sporting magazines have now joined the legion of the lost. The *Badminton*, founded, as its title suggests, by a Duke of Beaufort, was run by Alfred E. T. Watson, one of England's real authorities on the thoroughbred and a gentleman of the old school. I wrote quite a number of articles for him, on cricket, billiards and racing "down under". Magazines generally have taken a back seat these last few years; why, I can never understand. I must say I found all the older school of journalists much more approachable, and better mannered, than some of those who had come in with the new journalism. It was a pleasure to meet old John Corlett of the "Pink 'Un", as well as the famous members of his staff—Arthur Binstead, known to all and sundry as "Pitcher", Horace Lennard, Lieut.-Colonel Newnham Davis, who wrote under the soubriquet of "Dwarf of Blood", and J. B. Booth, the baby of them all.

I had the editorship of the *Sporting Times* offered to me in

1918. Corlett had disposed of his paper during the Great War and as the new owner wasn't in the least to the liking of the Bohemian crowd who had been with Corlett many years, they left *en bloc* and started a weekly of their own entitled *Town Topics*. However, too much capital was not in evidence, and Kennedy Jones, who had come out of Carmelite House with £500,000 only a short while previously, put up some money which kept the paper going a time. It was during this period that I became a contributor to *Town Topics* and met Edgar Wallace.

He was "K.J.'s" nominee as editor, but with no great success. Wallace had recently abandoned the attempt to make a payable proposition of the *Evening Times*, in conjunction with my old friend Bernard Falk, and John Cowley. They had some money behind them, but not enough—the fault of most new newspaper ventures. In my opinion, fully a million pounds is required to get a London evening paper on its feet. The *Pall Mall*, the *Globe*, and the *Westminster Gazette* were all political organs with rich men behind them, yet they failed in time, simply because their supporters grew tired of paying out, with little or no prospect of seeing their money back.

The *Pall Mall*, for instance, passed into the possession of Sir Henry Dalziel, the Radical M.P. who sat for Kirkcaldy. Dalziel, whom I knew intimately, eventually sold the paper to Sir John Leigh, the Lancashire cotton-waste millionaire, one of the Members for Wandsworth. I fancy Sir John imagined that he would thereby become a power in the political world. He soon found out his mistake; all he had to do was foot the bills. I happened to be at Dalziel's house in Hove one day when Sir John called, and I heard him tell Sir Henry that he had bought what he described as a "pup".

The *Westminster Gazette*, edited by the learned J. A. Spender, provided good literary reading, despite its pea-green paper and its ultra-Liberal politics. But the fairy god-father who kept it going, Sir Alfred Mond, also a millionaire, eventually gave it up. It must have been obvious to him that when the Asquithian Liberals were all that was left of a once-famous Party, it was no use financing a paper for them.

The *Globe* had been owned by little Sir William Madge, the proprietor of the *People*. Sir William was a staunch,

true-blue Tory, but even he couldn't, and wouldn't, stand the strain of a paper that never earned a dividend. The *Globe* lingered on through the Great War, got suspended for attacking Lord Kitchener, and then died a natural death.

In 1924 I made Sir William Madge an offer of £250,000 for the *People*, on behalf of Messrs. D. C. Thomson and Company of Dundee, a big firm in the North for whom I was then writing a great deal.

The circulation of the *People* was then about half a million, if that. The plant was out-of-date; the only real asset was the copyright and goodwill. However, Sir William, a rather choleric gentleman with a ruddy face and white hair, did not approve of my prospective buyer.

"What!" he burst out, "sell my paper to that damned Radical!"

I had to laugh, for anyone less Radical in his political views than D. C. Thomson I never met. I told Sir William that I doubted whether Mr. Thomson had any political views at all.

"When I sell my paper," said Sir William, "it will be sold on the understanding that it remains Tory." But he proved to be wrong.

I then approached Lord Riddell and Sir Emsley Carr, the owners of the *News of the World*, to which I was also a more or less valued contributor. Carr inquired: "What do we want with the *People*? Haven't we got a perfectly good paper of our own?"

"Quite true," I said. "But someone is going to get hold of the *People* and might succeed in making it a formidable rival"—having myself in mind. I had no idea of being a working journalist all my life. However, I couldn't make either Lord Riddell or Sir Emsley see the force of my argument.

What happened? Sir William Madge sold the *People* to James White, the millionaire company promoter who went "broke" shortly afterwards, and Colonel Grant Morden, the M.P. for Chiswick who at one time had a fortune in his grasp with British Celanese. These two gentlemen installed Hannen Swaffer as editor and handed over the printing to Odhams Press. They couldn't find the money to modernize the paper, much less to launch any big advertising campaigns.

which were necessary to gain some badly-needed circulation. At the finish, they couldn't even pay the printing bills, whereupon the trustees of Sir William Madge, who had died in the meantime, disposed of the paper to the shrewd Mr. J. S. Elias, of Odhams, who saw what I had seen, the possibility of making the *People* into a successful rival of the *News of the World*.

What Mr. Elias, now Lord Southwood, did with the *People*, has since passed into the history of Fleet Street. In less than ten years the circulation went from half a million to three million! All that is a story of its own.

Still another instance of fortunes going begging occurred in the case of the *Sunday Times*. It was sold during the Great War to the clever Berry brothers, William and Gomer, for, I believe, £80,000. It must have averaged £50,000 a year profit ever since.

One gets the reverse side of the picture, naturally. In 1918 Sir Henry Dalziel negotiated the purchase of the *Daily Chronicle* and *Lloyd's News* from the Lloyd family, and, according to what he told me himself, the price of the two papers, the freehold in Salisbury Square and the first-class machinery, was £1,500,000.

With a twinkle in his eye, Sir Henry added that Mr. Frank Lloyd said it was a case of money on the table. "I don't want any shares, Henry," he explained.

This, from all accounts, was a bit of a facer. However, the party stalwarts got busy and raised the sum required. Sir Robert Donald, the editor of the *Chronicle*, who had opposed the change of ownership with great vigour, resigned his post. I understand he got £60,000 for his shares and loss of office, and Dalziel came in as chairman and managing director.

Whatever his talents as a politician—not inconsiderable, I may say—Sir Henry Dalziel was not a real newspaper man. He hated expenditure and he had no earthly chance of keeping upsides with the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* unless he did spend money. In the autumn of 1925 he offered me the editorship of the *Sunday News*, at a salary which didn't in the least coincide with my ideas. I knew things were going badly; maybe the bank had lent money on the properties and was getting a trifle impatient. The next item of news concerning the *Chronicle* was that a request had gone out to the

late Marquess of Reading, who was then Viceroy of India, to see what he could do.

Lord Reading found two immensely rich men with great interests in India, who were prepared to keep the flag flying —Sir David Yule and Sir Thomas Catto. The former gentleman left behind as a tribute to his commercial perspicacity the useful little fortune of £25,000,000. There were people who said, possibly rather unkindly, that when Lloyd George allowed Lord Reading to go to India, he parted with the better half of his political brains, and that if the famous Rufus had remained in England, L.G. would never have involved himself in that support of the Greeks against the Turks which cost him his Premiership.

However, you hear these stories, and can believe them or not as you like. Apparently the two newcomers stipulated that Lord Reading, whose term as viceroy was just ending, should take over the control of United Newspapers, as it was known. Dalziel therefore retired and in Fleet Street we had the strange spectacle of a former Lord Chief Justice of England and Viceroy of India walking up and down the Street of Adventure, which at any rate was a change from sitting in state at a Delhi durbar. It would be doing this super-clever lawyer no injustice to say that he was just a fish out of water.

The incoming combination proved no more successful than the one before. Sir David Yule soon tired of paying out, for he hadn't made £25,000,000 by such methods. The order went forth to find another rich man to hold the baby.

This proved to be Mr. William Harrison, of the Inveresk Paper Company, Illustrated Newspapers, and many other enterprises. Mr. Harrison cheerfully stepped in where many a Fleet Street angel would have feared to tread. He hired wonder-workers at handsome salaries, right and left, and sat back to watch the profits roll in. Instead, they rolled out. The bank financing Mr. Harrison, Lloyds, also began to manifest a modicum of doubt, which later on took the form of putting in a Receiver. Mr. Harrison went out as the Receiver came in.

Edgar Wallace was brought in to see if he could make a job of the *Sunday News* in the intervals of writing a novel a week. Edgar never was an editor; he abandoned the hope-

less task and went back to his proper vocation. Lloyds Bank resolved to cut its losses; the *Sunday News* was sold to Allied Newspapers for a song. It was worthless now, anyway, and the Cadburys wouldn't touch a Sunday paper. But they bought the *Daily Chronicle* and incorporated it with the *Daily News*, as they had done with the *Morning Leader* some years previously.

I tell this story merely to emphasize how a fortune can go down the drain with a newspaper, far more easily than one can be made. There must have been a million pounds and more loss over this affair, and I put the catastrophe down to nothing but incapacity. London journalism is a job for professionals, not amateurs.

There were two Dalziels in those days, though they had no relationship beyond being brother Scots. Davison Dalziel, who also became a peer—Lord Dalziel of Wooler—was the gentleman who promoted the International Wagon Lits at considerable profit to himself and much subsequent detriment to Thomas Cook and Son. He died leaving behind a fortune of £2,000,000, of which his widow found one million in hard cash in the bank. He was at one time also the presiding deity of the Pullman cars in this country. A hard man, I found him.

Henry, first and last Baron Dalziel of Kirkcaldy, left £407,000, and beyond a modest bequest of £5,000 to his brother Tom, and a like sum to his sister, his will, with a few other small bequests, said that his money should go to the redemption of the National Debt—about the most useless idea I ever heard of, considering that our obligations in that direction now amount to twenty thousand million pounds. Henry's little lot was just a drop in the ocean. He was a remarkable character, especially when you consider that he came to London without a penny, after being elected Member for Kirkcaldy at the age of twenty-one. He was twenty-eight years in the House of Commons and along with his old friend T. P. O'Connor, and Lloyd George, possessed the distinction of being one of the oldest members who had held his seat without a break.

"Tay Pay", a dear old chap if ever I met one, was frequently to be encountered at Dalziel's house in Hove, the famous snuff all over his coat, and always beaming. Never

did I meet such a good-natured man, which probably explains why he started so many papers which proved successful in other people's hands, the *Star* being an outstanding case. I happened to be speaking to him one day about the late Sir Alfred Tobin, the lawyer who defended Crippen and was afterwards made a County Court judge at Westminster; why, no one could understand, least of all the unfortunate lawyers and litigants who appeared before him.

"I got him that job," Tay Pay told me. "He used to come up to my constituency at Liverpool and stand against me, knowing all the time he hadn't the ghost of a chance. Also, it cost me money I couldn't afford, to fight these elections. So one day I said to Herbert Asquith: 'I wish you would give that fellow Tobin a judgeship, or something to keep him quiet. He's a confounded nuisance.' "

Certainly there was vast surprise in the Temple when Tobin became a County Court judge. A more unsuitable person for such a post could hardly be imagined, for Westminster is an important Court. He was an inordinately vain man, petulant to a degree, and exceedingly rude to everybody. He died leaving £60,000, which was almost as great a shock as his appointment to the Bench.

Still, judgeships are frequently like that. I once asked Sir George Younger, the Chairman of the Unionist Party, why Henry Terrell, K.C., M.P., one of the three leading men at the Chancery Bar, had retired with a modest County Court judgeship. It was a ridiculous post for a man of his talents and he had served the Party ably and faithfully for twelve years as M.P. for Gloucester. I knew him extremely well; he was a major in my regiment, the Gloucesters, during the Great War, and a man of fine character.

"He could have had a judgeship if he had asked for it," Sir George informed me.

Terrell laughed a bit grimly when I told him this; I gathered that he thought the offer should have come from the government, without any suggestions from him.

However, I shall refrain from any more stories about the legal luminaries; they can wait until later.

CHAPTER III

TEST CRICKET AND BOXING. A FAMOUS REFEREE

If I have rather let my pen run away from my early days in Fleet Street, it is only because one loses continuity by breaking off a narrative in the middle, a fact of which all film producers are well aware.

Throughout 1912 and 1913 most of my time was engaged with sport, until I went on the staff of the *Daily Citizen*, the new Labour organ which had been started by the Trade Unions. The *Daily Herald* was languishing; if it had not been for George Lansbury, who unselfishly sacrificed the greater part of his private fortune—derived mainly from his timber business at Bow—and occasional help from the Women's Suffrage movement, it would have gone completely under. Its somewhat violent policy was anathema to the sober-minded ideas of men like Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, Philip Snowden and others who saw the day coming when Labour would be on top. I forgot to mention J. H. Thomas, the general secretary of the Railwaymen's Union; he, indeed, was a host in himself.

In 1912 I enjoyed myself travelling round England with the Australian XI which had come over under the captaincy of Sid Gregory to take part in the Triangular Tests. A greater farce than this scheme was never perpetrated. It originated, I believe, in the brain of Sir Abe Bailey, the South African millionaire, and the first objection to it was that the South Africans would have no earthly chance with either England or Australia. Then another contretemps occurred. My esteemed friend, Warwick Armstrong, always a bit of a rebel, took umbrage, along with several more of Australia's leading cricketers, at the authority now being exercised over these tours by the Australian Board of Control—then only recently constituted.

Clem Hill, Albert Cotter the fast bowler, Herbert Carter—one of the best wicket-keepers I have ever come across—and, if my memory serves me aright, M. A. Noble, were the principal malcontents, and I didn't blame them. Armstrong, for one, wouldn't be dictated to; he is strong in the arm and

equally strong in the head. Neither would Noble, if it came to that; he and Warwick were the pillars of Australian cricket and they had no intention of being treated like children. They just said to the Board: "We're not going to your Triangular Tests."

However, a team was got together, with swarthy, dark-moustached S. E. Gregory as captain, and duly arrived in London. I went along to see Gregory; he said: "I'm very sorry, I've got to keep my mouth shut. There's been trouble enough already." A good foretaste of the Board's workings!

I doubt whether Gregory liked the job at all. Speech-making in public wasn't his line of country; he was a wonderful little batsman—about the best I ever saw at putting a ball through the slips—and as a cover-point superb. But hardly a captain for an Australian tour, on which social qualities are just as important as cricket. And that applies also to the matter of M.C.C. teams in Australia, let me tell them at Marylebone!

Gregory's main hopes were centred on little Charlie Macartney, whom I had first seen in Western Australia a few years previously. Macartney takes high rank in my list of outstanding cricketers; he is among the first six batsmen of the world. Such wrists, such crispness all round the wicket! He and Don Bradman are about the most confident pair of run-getters ever known.

Somewhere or other I still have a photograph of the players as they came out of the gate for their first match at Nottingham. My old friend A. O. Jones was still on deck to lead the locals and by brilliant captaincy he beat the poor Aussies. I have not forgotten Jonah's somewhat untimely jubilation; just as the match was finishing, he was dancing round the ground shouting: "We've done 'em. We've done 'em."

Notts, of course, were a strong side in those days, what with Jones, Joe Hardstaff, the Gunns, Iremonger and a few more I have forgotten.

One way and another, the whole tour was a fiasco. The weather turned foul, the Aussies couldn't play Barnes. I felt very depressed, as I always do when my countrymen are whacked at cricket. Barnes in England was an even better bowler than in Australia; E. J. Smith kept wicket marvel-

lously, while as for Hobbs and Rhodes, Gregory hadn't a bowler who could get near them. His best was the fast left-hander from South Australia, Bill Whitty.

It is quite obvious, for other reasons, that Triangular Tests are not worth bothering about. They completely interrupt the English county season by taking away so many players; they spoil the club gates, and they also alienate public interest, on the old adage that you can always have too much of a good thing. Personally, I think Test matches are fast reaching the stage when they should be termed Pest Matches. That historic one in South Africa which lasted ten days, and even then remained unfinished, was about the last straw to break the camel's back.

On the *Daily Citizen* we boasted what might be called a mixed bag of journalists. The editor was Frank Dilnot, brought over from the *Daily Mail*. We had the redoubtable Tom Webster for our cartoonist; he was just down from Birmingham, having abandoned, and wisely so, the idea of being a booking clerk on a railway all his life. Some five years later, I met him in Whitefriars Street, looking very down in the mouth. He was in khaki, but on the verge of being invalided out.

I, too, was now out of the army and asked him the trouble.

"I've got to get a job," he told me. "Do you know of anything going?"

I took him down to the *Weekly Dispatch* office and introduced him to Hannen Swaffer, saying that Tom stood on his own as a sporting cartoonist. On the strength of this recommendation, Tom did us a few pictures, and very good they were, too. He attracted the attention of Lord Northcliffe, but not at all favourably.

So Tom got the sack and took up free-lancing, selling his drawings where he could. Once more did he attract the notice of the Big Chief, in slightly better fashion. Tom Webster must be found and signed up to work exclusively for the *Daily Mail*. And that, may it please you, was the beginning of a very lucrative contract.

But the outstanding member of the *Citizen* staff was Ernest Buley, for a time the news editor. He, like "Dry-blower" Murphy, must have a place in my gallery of fame. Like myself, he was an Australian. Getting on for middle

age, rather portly, with a slight beard and very fond of the Turf, Buley had the Napoleonic touch about him. He had previously been on the *Evening News* under the formidable Kennedy Jones, who was a holy terror and no mistake. If you pleased "K.J." you were well-nigh perfect.

During this auspicious period on the *Evening News*, "K.J." commissioned a serial from Marie Connor Leighton, the author of that famous story "Convict 99", which had been run through one of Northcliffe's periodicals with startling success. "K.J." wanted something similar and Mrs. Leighton duly obliged.

The serial ran on for many weeks with no complaints. Summer-time arrived and with it "K.J.'s" annual holiday. "Keep it going," he barked to Buley as he left. "It's good stuff."

He was away a month; on his return he began going through the files and reading the story. By this time there were so many characters in it that he couldn't make head or tail of the plot. He rang for Buley.

"This goddam story," he snapped out in his rasping voice. "Get rid of it at once."

"How?" inquired Buley.

"I don't care. Write a final instalment and get it finished to-morrow."

So Buley sat himself down. He bought a yacht for the villain-in-chief; he then made the rascal invite all the participants in the drama for a Channel cruise. They duly set off, and that identical night a terrific storm blew up and drowned everybody. That's London literature!

Friday was the night the "ghost" walked. Sometimes it was a toss-up whether we drew our salaries, especially towards the end, and on these occasions the reaction was so great that we had to dissipate. One such evening thirteen of us went up to a Soho restaurant, dined well and cheaply, and then cast around for something further to do.

"I know," said Buley. "We'll go over to that New Gallery cinema. They're always after me to have a look in." It had just been opened, I might explain, and the Press were very welcome.

We walked across Regent Street and Buley sent a message upstairs to the manager to ask whether he might have a

seat for himself and a friend or two. The manager came running down, saying: "Why, certainly, Mr. Buley. How many do you want?"

"Thirteen," replied Buley. I can still remember that poor chap's face; he surrendered with good grace—but we never got another invitation to the New Gallery.

One or two other tasty morsels also stick in my mind; the first is the spectacle of the elephantine Leoncavallo being brought over from Italy to conduct at the London Hippodrome an act from his opera "*Pagliacci*". I had been deputed to interview him, so preliminarily I watched the show. Leoncavallo was escorted in by an obsequious manager, who carefully placed him a chair. The act was played and Leoncavallo was just as reverently taken out; I had doubts whether the chair wouldn't go out clinging to him.

I departed back stage for the interview. The manager explained that the Maestro spoke no English; he would have to interpret.

"Ask him," I requested, "what he thinks of English music."

Leoncavallo said there was no such thing as English music.

"Then what does he think about London?"

"It is a very large city."

"Would he like to appear in Covent Garden?"

"Yes, if they will pay him enough money."

I gave up, being speeded off with a disgusted grunt from the great composer. He was receiving, I believe, £600 a week, these being the days when Moss Empires had money to burn.

At the Shaftesbury Theatre old Bob Courtneidge, father of the famous Cicely, had a musical comedy called "*The Mouismé*". On the opening night the Japanese Ambassador received a couple of complimentaries and kindly honoured the show with his presence, plus Madame. I was always pretty friendly with the old man and his manager, Montefiore. The latter asked me, as the curtain fell and the audience was streaming out, whether I would inquire from His Excellency how he liked this representation of life in Japan.

I did so, having then all the cheek in creation. The Am-

bassador beamed on me with true Japanese unction. "Ah," he said in his high-pitched voice, "it is very pretty, but it is not Japan. No."

I left the *Citizen* for a time in 1913 to work for the London office of the Sydney *Sun* and other Australian evening papers. The pay was rather poor, though the prospects were supposed to be good. It was a somewhat onerous post for one so young in journalism, for I had to sit in the *Times* office in Printing House Square cabling "down under" all night, from seven in the evening, until three or four o'clock next morning.

I could then go home to bed, get up about eleven, return to town, and spend the afternoon interviewing various Colonial celebrities, picking up items of news, or perhaps writing special articles. The rest of the day I had to myself. In the middle of the winter, making my way home through slush and snow on a bitterly cold morning, I contracted a very fine dose of pneumonia and pleurisy, which nearly finished me off. I left the *Sun*, and made up my mind that never again would I work under such conditions. I was wretchedly paid, and considering the importance of the work, should have been receiving a good salary. Why I am telling the story is because my successor, sent over from Australia, was Keith Murdoch. The world knows him better to-day as Sir Keith Murdoch, the proprietor of several big papers in Australia and also a prominent man in public affairs. It just shows you!

In 1914 we got into the throes of a boxing boom. There arrived from the Antipodes that since-famous figure, Colin Bell, who had the honour of being immortalized on the halls by Harry Weldon with: "Tell 'em what I did to Colin Bell."

I found Colin an extremely pleasant chap, slightly bald-headed, with but few marks of the "pug"; he had been a wood-chopper. I don't know that he was a great champion and on speaking to Hugh D. MacIntosh, who was then in London, I was told that Colin wouldn't stand an earthly chance with the man he had to meet, Bombardier Billy Wells. "Mac" was a good judge, if rather rude in his opinions.

Charles B. Cochran—king of all showmen in my estimation and a fine sport—had the bout. It turned out an utter

fiasco. In the second round, with Colin all at sea against the confident Wells, he fell for a left feint and received a mighty crack with the right which laid him senseless on the floor. I have never seen a boxer put out so dramatically. A bucket of water had to be thrown over him to bring him round and poor Colin went back to Australia, sadder but wiser.

Then we had Willie Ritchie, the American light-weight champion of the world, fighting Freddie Welsh for his title at Olympia. Freddie gave him an unmitigated thrashing, which pleased me, and all the other scribes, immensely. We had been down to his training quarters at Brighton; from the way he talked, you would have thought the fight was all over before it started. I believe that from this match Welsh got little but the title; it did not greatly attract the public, though I may be doing Mr. Cochran an injustice in saying so.

Most of these Yankee boxers are greedy fellows, or their managers are. Ask "C.B." I dare say he would be the first to admit that his boxing ventures have been none too profitable.

Hereabouts I made the acquaintance of that notable character, Eugene Corri. I make bold to say that the boxing fraternity will never boast another man like him. He was the last of the Corinthians.

Corri was only an assumed name. He had been born Corry, his father having been an opera singer well-known in London many years ago. Everyone called him 'Gene, from the highest to the lowest. Certainly he was distinctive enough in his appearance, a good-looking, well-set-up man, always beautifully dressed, rarely without cigar, and sporting, as part and parcel of his famous personality, one of those old grey Corinthian toppers only to be seen in the ancient engravings of the noble art.

And what a smile! 'Gene went through fair weather and foul, mostly the latter, times innumerable in his chequered career, with an expansive grin which endeared him to everybody. It was "All right, old sport," whatever you wanted. I have known him to borrow a "tenner" from an obliging friend inside the old National Sporting Club in Covent Garden, walk outside, there to be met by some down-at-heel boxer with a whining tale, and part with half the money inside the space of five minutes.

Now, Corri's life was a tragedy, in more ways than one. I knew him very well indeed, when he was the friend of millionaires, and even of royalty.

If ever a man in the world had everything in his favour from the beginning, it was Eugene Corri. In the late 'nineties, when he was a member of the famous Belsize Club in Hampstead, he ran into Jack Joel, the South African millionaire, who used to be pretty handy with the "dukes" himself. Corri, of course, was a first-class amateur, and he used to spar with the young Joels until such time as he became a regular member of that sporting crowd linked up with the firm of Barnato Brothers, which was controlled by Jack and Solly Joel in the City of London.

'Gene was made a member of the "Thieves' Kitchen", a club ostensibly known as the City Athenæum, where all the nabobs of the South African gold market used to congregate.

Then the Joels bought him a seat on the Stock Exchange, and made him one of their private brokers at the handsome salary of £5,000 a year.

Alas, 'Gene's soul was never in business; Jack Joel told me that they would send him into the market to buy perhaps £100,000 worth of stocks and shares, and patiently await his return. Lunch-time would come, but no sign of 'Gene. Two, three and then four o'clock would pass, until it would be discovered that 'Gene was down at the National Sporting Club, whisky in one hand and cigar in the other, hobnobbing with the fighters. Reluctantly, then, the Joels parted company with him, and 'Gene for many years had a very thin time. How he existed, heaven alone knows. He was always well-dressed, and as far as I know his only means of existence were the fees he got for refereeing fights.

Yet, with all due respect to his reputation as a referee; I do not think he was wonderfully good in an emergency. My mind goes back to that memorable night at Olympia in 1914, just before the Great War, when Georges Carpentier fought the American sailor Gunboat Smith, with 'Gene as third man in the ring.

I saw a good deal of Gunboat Smith for a week or two before the event. He was training at the King's Head Hotel at Harrow, and I well remember a palmist arriving there one day, when he was doing a try-out, to prognosticate from the

lines in his hand the result of the fight. The big, raw-boned Gunboat, a very decent, simple-minded sort of fellow, held out his "mitt", and amidst a tense silence, the soothsayer announced that he would be beaten.

The poor Gunboat looked a bit sick, and to this day I don't know whether that artful individual François Descamps, who so cleverly managed Carpentier, was the person responsible. Personally, I couldn't see the youthful, slimly-built Carpentier beating this big, husky American. Gunboat Smith might not have been a champion, but he could take a hiding as well as give one.

Carpentier arrived in London only a few hours before the fight, with a gigantic reception at Charing Cross worthy of the President of the French Republic.

This was the famous fight promoted by the late Dick Burge, and it might be said to mark the beginning of boxing becoming fashionable in London. There were hundreds of women in evening dress around the ringside and seats were fetching ten guineas apiece.

We had a certain amount of amusement to begin with. In one of the preliminary bouts between Bandsman Blake and a gentleman named Toin Gummer, the latter was "out to the wide" at the end of the third round—Blake being a pretty useful customer. However, Gummer's seconds did their best; they laid hold of their man and indulged in that well-known but highly unpleasant process of screwing his ears round until he regained some sort of consciousness. He got up for the fourth round looking a bit dazed, but seemingly full of fight.

Evidently it had been dimmed into his benumbed brain that if he wanted to win, he would have to do it quickly. So he swung an almighty right at the bouncing Bandsman, which that individual neatly ducked. Unfortunately the referee, poor old Jim Hulls, was standing too close behind. Jim caught the swing, and he did about fourteen somersaults before he hit the floor. Ultimately order was restored and Mr. Hulls naturally decided that Mr. Gummer was no friend of his.

This Carpentier-Smith fight was a dirty, scrambling affair, with little good boxing to redeem it. Carpentier seemed to

be in mortal dread of being knocked out, while the ponderous Gunboat vainly stabbed and jabbed in an effort to finish the fight off. Now and again, Carpentier hit his man hard, but with little or no effect. The sixth round had just started when Carpentier, obviously weakening, was roughed down on the floor, and sat there waiting for the chance to get up.

A terrific uproar arose and here Corri lost his head. Instead of ordering the Gunboat back to his corner as he should have done, he let the American stand over the French boy and aim a mighty blow at his head which just whistled past. If it had connected, Carpentier would have been knocked senseless.

Talk about pandemonium! Yells and shrieks from ten thousand throats. Women standing up hysterically screaming "Coward" at the poor Gunboat who, I am quite sure, never realized at the moment what he had done. Corri stood in the ring temporarily paralysed; he should have disqualified Smith instantaneously. But before he could do so Descamps had jumped into the ring and run over to his man, dragging him back towards his corner. That should have been sufficient to have disqualified Carpentier.

I suppose the better part of a quarter of an hour passed away before the frightful noise subsided. Then the badly-flustered 'Gene gave his verdict, that Gunboat Smith had been disqualified on a foul.

One may watch boxing for years without seeing such a thing happen again. There is no doubt in my mind that if the fight had followed its normal course, Carpentier must have been beaten. He was giving away a lot of weight, and by the end of the fifth round, I think, he had had enough.

Inquests! Boxing is full of them. The last fight I saw Eugene Corri referee was that for the middleweight championship of the world between the American Mickey Walker, the holder, and Tommy Milligan, the Scottish boy. It took place at Olympia in 1927 under the management of C. B. Cochran, on the very night that one of Corri's greatest friends, the ex-millionaire James White, committed suicide. The news had leaked out and the attendance, which would probably have been enormous, had shrunk to less than half the expected number.

Walker had in his corner that very astute gentleman,

Jack Kearns, the former protégé of Jack Dempsey, and when I saw Walker get into the ring I said good-bye to Milligan's chance. A better-developed middleweight I never saw! Nevertheless, for about four rounds Milligan gave the American, world champion as he was, the finest lesson in boxing I have seen for many a long day. He jabbed and punched Walker all round the ring, and the redoubtable Mickey hung on to his opponent so desperately that I wondered Corri did not disqualify him. I know if I had been refereeing the fight, he would have had one warning and no more.

But Corri did nothing. At the end of the four rounds, Milligan was about played out. Then the slaughter began, and a disgusting sight it was until the twelfth round when Milligan's seconds wisely threw in the towel. He never fought again.

Being a nimble-minded man, Corri tried his hand at many occupations. Among other things, he became a bookmaker. But the closing years of his life were positively pathetic. He lived in two or three rooms in a dingy little house in Thorpe Bay and I doubt whether any of the rich and aristocratic friends of the good old days ever really knew of his plight. I was able to help him with a little money for some of his reminiscences: the first thing he did with it was typical of his impulsive generosity. He sent out for a bottle of whisky, which I wanted no more than he did.

My journalistic career came temporarily to an end in August 1914 when I enlisted in the Royal Engineers. Why the R.E., heaven alone knows. I thought of applying for a commission, but baulked at the idea on concluding that officers wanted experience. This was a slight mistake on my part, as I discovered later, though to be sure Lord Kitchener himself, as he told my friend, Colonel Norman Thwaites, was all averse to the ready-made officer. "K" liked them to go through the ranks.

At Chatham I found you wanted a trade to be a sapper; however, they took me in without much ado and after a most perfunctory medical examination. The M.O. said "Hop." I duly did so; he then remarked: "Good. General Service."

My commanding officer, when thousands of us had been

sorted out, proved to be an old Regular. He interrogated us one by one. "You're a journalist, I see," he said to me with a frosty smile.

"Yes, sir."

"H'm, well, I suppose you'll be writing some books about the war?"

"I shouldn't be surprised, sir," though nothing was further from my mind. As a matter of fact, for some little time during my sojourn at Chatham, I ran the regimental paper *The Sapper*, until the day came when we found ourselves at the chilly health resort of Buxton.

How should I know that three years later, I should be in Paris, with the former Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies? As a humble sapper of the Royal Engineers, one of my immediate duties was to start soldiering.

My war experiences are of no great interest and I will not bore anyone with them. I was eventually commissioned into the Gloucestershire Regiment and after two-and-a-half years' service gazetted out. I went through the greater part of the Somme campaign in 1916, fell into a nice mouthful of gas one fine night when the Germans were sending over gas shells to kill off our wounded, and ultimately reached England coughing my heart out. I said "Good-bye to all that" with no regrets.

Six months elapsed before I could take any employment. I called at the Admiralty to see Captain Guy Gaunt, our naval attaché at Washington, to see whether I might return to the States with him for Intelligence work, an aspect of war far more interesting to me than anything else. Newspaper men were supposed to be wanted in America for this and propaganda. Gaunt was a countryman of mine. Preliminarily, however, I had to be "vetted" by Foreign and War Office people. This proving more or less satisfactory, I was sent on to Gaunt, who requested me to write him out my ideas of how I would unmask a gang of German agents! Apparently I failed to pass this test, for I didn't go to America. In any case, Woodrow Wilson at long last screwed up his courage to fight the common enemy, and my valuable services were not required.

Like Paddy, I did the next best thing. I got a job in Fleet Street—on the *Daily Mail*, to be precise.

CHAPTER IV

GREAT DAYS IN FLEET STREET

No one except Bernard Falk has yet written a really good book about Fleet Street. Philip Gibbs tried to do so with *The Street of Adventure*. I think he did not succeed because he had never been through the mill.

In Carmelite House I found a severe training school for modern journalism, allied to a passion for accuracy which quickly cured me of any false ideas that the *Daily Mail* was nothing but an organ of what the old-fashioned journalistic brigade described as stunts.

Its dynamic proprietor was then sitting on top of the world; along with Beaverbrook, he had just turned the Asquith Government out of office. Now he was on his way to the States with a mission to tell the American people all about the war, leaving behind him the competent Tom Marlowe to keep the English up to the mark.

Marlowe was an alert, white-haired man, pink of face, slightly deaf and very much all there. I found myself relegated to a position hardly suitable to my ideas—that of night reporter, with Scotland Yard to cultivate. At four o'clock in the afternoon I began duty; about half-past twelve, if nothing sensational broke, I could go home. I was in no state of health to stand these late hours; it was thankfully enough a few months later that I agreed with the powers that were about finding another job.

I had not far to go; I merely walked upstairs and went on the *Weekly Dispatch*, then edited by the famous Hannen Swaffer. Later on, discovering that I would have a lot of time on my hands in the early part of the week, I also did some work for the *Daily Express*, a post I had to vacate a year afterwards when the war was coming to an end.

During my brief career on the *Mail* there occurred an incident which had its amusing side. I happened to walk into Bow Street police station one night—to cover these places came into my province—and heard a tremendous argument going on in the charge room. One of the officers on duty kindly “put me wise”. The centre of all this dis-

turbance was no less a person than Mr. Godfrey Isaacs, the head of the Marconi Company and, of course, the brother of the late Lord Reading, the Lord Chief Justice of England.

About eight o'clock that evening, he had come out of Marconi House and walked to the front of the Gaiety Theatre, with the intention of taking a taxi to Waterloo. He lived at Datchet, down the river. The taxi-man he approached said he wasn't going that way; what he wanted, naturally enough, was the brisk business of the West End. Mr. Isaacs retorted that taxi-cabs were for the public convenience; the driver apparently thought otherwise. High words ensued and in the middle of them a couple of young policemen came up, with the result that the quarrelling parties were conducted to Bow Street. Apparently there had also been quite an amount of bad language on the part of the cabman; Mr. Isaacs may also have said a few words.

They duly reached Bow Street and for the better part of three hours the inspector in charge laboriously took down in long-hand statements made by the pair of them. Mr. Isaacs additionally wanted to report the two P.C.'s for neglect of duty. Coming from such a person as the brother of the Lord Chief, the Inspector couldn't very well decline, so, one way and another, the atmosphere was rather heated. Like a good little newspaperman, I immediately hopped back to Carmelite House and wrote up this diverting comedy in which the Lord Chief's brother was still involved. He hadn't gone when I departed from the scene.

Complications set in straightaway. Lord Reading, I found, was an intimate friend of Lord Northcliffe, and the Night Editor, Charles Beattie, wouldn't print the story without getting the consent of Mr. Isaacs. I must find him forthwith.

Bow Street informed me on the telephone that he had left. I rang up his house at Datchet to learn that he had not arrived there. At Marconi House nothing was known of his whereabouts. Getting desperate, for I wanted my "scoop" printed, I took the liberty of calling up Lord Reading himself at this now unholy hour—one o'clock in the morning. He happened to answer the 'phone himself, and when I told him the reason of my inquiry, he uttered an astonished "Good gracious." Anyhow, he did not know his brother's where-

abouts. So the story didn't go in; it remained over for Mr. Marlowe to see the following day.

I was then instructed to call at Marconi House, see Mr. Isaacs personally, and get his permission to relate what had happened. When I was shown into his palatial office, he said, none too politely: "Yes, what do you want?"

"Apropos that little affair you were mixed up in last night, Mr. Isaacs. Mr. Marlowe"—whom he knew well—"wants to know whether you have any objection to our publishing the matter."

He looked at me, apparently very astonished. "What are you talking about?" he demanded, quite rudely. "I have not been mixed up in any affair."

I didn't like the gentleman. "You needn't bother about that," I said. "I saw you."

"Oh," was his reply, long drawn out. "That's different." Thereupon he proceeded to tell me the ins-and-outs of the squabble which, I might say, redounded to his credit no more than to that of the cabman. I went off, with full permission to print what I liked.

But mark what followed! Mr. Isaacs wrote to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Edward Henry, making a very strong complaint about the conduct of the two young P.C.'s. He was invited to attend at Scotland Yard, where no doubt Sir Edward would have smoothed him down.

He related to the Commissioner, a soldier of the old school, his version of the trouble and Sir Edward Henry remarked: "But tell me, Mr. Isaacs, why did you bother to mention this matter to the *Daily Mail*? Surely it would have been better to have kept quiet until you had seen me?"

Mr. Isaacs's reply to Sir Edward Henry was: "I have never seen anyone from the *Daily Mail* in my life."

I heard all about this unblushing denial the next day from one of my friends at the Yard.

On the *Weekly Dispatch* there began a life much more to my liking. Swaffer was an unconventional soul, who had been at Carmelite House before as Art Editor of the *Mail* and had been brought back by Northcliffe, somewhat to the annoyance of the crowd who didn't care for his strong in-

dividuality. But the Old Man said: "He's coming back, whether you like it or not."

Swaffer, I might add, was about the only member of the staff who could really talk to Northcliffe. To his lordship, Swaffer was "Poet", doubtless a tribute to the long, wavy hair which the Editor of the *Weekly Dispatch* affected.

I never met a man who knew so many people in London. West of Ludgate Circus, as far as, say, Hyde Park Corner, he seemed to know everybody and everybody knew him. He was a vast power in the theatrical world; it was an eye-opener to me to see the way the managers made haste to greet him. One thing I liked about him more than anything else was his utter fearlessness; he didn't mind what evil he tackled, and the higher the people concerned the better.

We had a cut at the War Office over the disgraceful suits of clothes being issued to men of decent birth on being discharged. One or two of them called at the office in the wretched reach-me-downs they wore; they might well have come out of a convict prison. The repercussions were strong and immediate; I was invited to meet Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, the victor of Le Cateau, who was then on the Army Council. He was full of sympathy and kindness; the scandal would be remedied forthwith. And it was, though I regret to say that the same trouble has cropped up again in this war.

Then came an attack on the Navy and Army Canteen Board for gross profiteering at the expense of the troops. This brought an invitation to attend a meeting of the Board and tell them more: I went, to find Major-General Lord Cheylesmore sitting at the head of a huge mahogany board-room table, surrounded by a couple of dozen brass-hats. I felt properly awed, until I discovered that most of these Staff colonels and majors who looked so fierce were nothing but wholesale grocers from Tooley Street. What a game! The upshot of this interesting little "stunt" was a tour of the Southern Command canteens with a couple of Staff "colonels" to wait on me, answering very respectfully as I asked what such-and-such an article cost, and what was charged for it. Great is the power of the Press.

We also attacked what we called camouflage colonels walking around the West End of London in full uniform, being saluted by men who had been all through the hell of

the Western Front. This was a *real* scandal, for we knew the history of some of them. They were full of indignation; they knew whom we were getting at. One would come up when we were dining or lurching, saying: "What the hell do you mean by calling me a camouflage colonel? I'll have the law on you."

"Oh, that's all right, Bill (or Harry). We don't mean you, we were referring to So-and-So."

Next day, perhaps, Harry (or Bill) would be encountered, with the same query. They all got the same answer.

I could tell hundreds of good stories about Swaffer; he had a pretty wit when the necessity arose. One Saturday we committed the heinous crime of going to the Savoy for lunch with, I think, Max Pemberton, the novelist, an old friend of Lord Northcliffe's. On a Sunday paper, I might explain, you usually stay in all day, from eleven in the morning until supper-time.

We were a long time with the genial Max; it was well after three o'clock before we returned to the office, to discover that the Chief had been ringing up continuously asking for his missing Editor. Just then the bell rang again. I answered it, to find his lordship at the other end and in no amiable mood. "Swaffer there?" he snapped.

"Here you are, Swaffer," I said. "This is your funeral."

For a matter of ten minutes he had to listen to his infuriated proprietor; then he got tired of it and said to Northcliffe: "Congratulations, Chief, on being made a Viscount. Shan't be able to dodge a title myself soon."

I heard the crash of the 'phone at the other end!

We went to lunch at Romano's with "Kim", the Duke of Manchester. He did us royally and well, being a generous man, and at the conclusion of the repast, duly grateful, Swaffer asked him whether he would like to see a big fight taking place at the Ring that afternoon. The Duke said he would indeed. We drove back to Carmelite House in the ducal brougham—one of the slight eccentricities of his Grace—where I telephoned Mr. Dick Burge at the Ring to impart the palpitating news that Mr. Swaffer, the Duke of Manchester and myself would like three nice ringside seats. Mr. Burge expressed his delight and said it was as good as done.

About three-thirty p.m. we reached the scene of the struggle, to find a huge crowd—and they were a tough-looking lot!—clamouring for admission. However, Mr. Burge had fulfilled his part of the contract well and truly. There was a gentleman outside awaiting the arrival of the party. In a stentorian voice which could be heard from one end of the Blackfriars Road to the other, he yelled out: "Make way there for the Mayor of Manchester."

One night we walked into the *sanctum sanctorum* of James White, the millionaire company promoter. "Jim" kept open house for his friends. As a former officer of His Majesty's Army, I was somewhat intrigued to find there a smart-looking young fellow in a blue serge suit, on which he had fastened the ribbon of the Victoria Cross. He was telling White and a number of other men how he had won the V.C., how he, a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps, had been on patrol over the Western Front and had shot down a German machine with his Very pistol—all his ammunition exhausted. Quite a hero, believe me.

But I thought to myself: "You're a funny guy. A serving officer wearing ribbons on civilian clothes. It ain't done, my lad." Still, I kept my mouth shut and interestedly watched White, the soul of good nature, have a whip round for the young gentleman. He got £50 in five minutes; I contributed nothing, smelling a rat.

For the next week or two, this dauntless youth was in and out of White's office every day. Rich men entertained him to lunches and dinners, at which he modestly repeated his deeds of derring-do. One night at the Criterion Restaurant in Piccadilly Circus—then managed by the popular Luigi Naintre—a party of us were dining, V.C. and all. I noticed, shortly after the meal began, two "red-caps" continually looking over the curtain on the outside door, and wondered what the devil was up.

We had reached the fish when I discovered. One large-sized military policeman came up to our table, tapped our V.C. on the shoulder, and said: "Come on, we can't wait any longer for you."

Without even bidding us farewell, or thanking us for our hospitality, our guest went. The next thing we heard of him was: "Wanted for absenting himself from his unit

without leave"; "passing valueless cheques"; "wearing military decorations without authority"; "unlawfully posing as an officer of H.M. services", and one or two other offences I have forgotten. He got eighteen months' hard labour; when he left prison, he called on Jimmy White, requesting the loan of £50 to give him a fresh start in the world!

Another Criterion yarn. We were dining there on the evening the news came through that General Allenby had entered Jerusalem. Luigi brought the tidings, very pleased indeed, and said: "Mr. Swaffer, we must have a bottle of champagne to celebrate this great event!"

The wine was brought and duly quaffed. Half an hour later, Luigi came back, his face doleful. "Mr. Swaffer," he said, "the news is not true. Allenby has not entered Jerusalem. We must have another bottle to drown our sorrow." And we did.

Swaffer was desirous of finding some nice, bright epigrams, these being things of which he was very fond. He wrote to Somerset Maugham, asking him if he could let him have, for publication in next Sunday's paper, six brand-new epigrams. I still recollect Mr. Maugham's reply: "Dear Swaffer,—If I could think of six good epigrams such as you want, I would write a play around them and make a lot of money for myself."

Joking apart, Swaffer frequently got hold of a brilliant idea. About the best one he ever thought of was the immense harm being done to the British Empire by films which were made by people who knew nothing whatever of the importance of maintaining our Colonial prestige. It was obvious, then, and still more so now, that this indiscriminate production of films which portray the white races in their less worthy moments, are not calculated to assist a nation like ours, which for two centuries has controlled a vast Empire, and hundreds of millions of people living in it, with nothing but skeleton forces.

You want to be in India properly to realize this; or, say, Malaya or Burma, where the natives have been looking at us with a captious eye for many a long year. I have seen it myself in North Africa, in Tangier to be precise, with big, buck Moors and Riffs sniggering derisively at the white

man's conception of how to treat his women. In South Africa, as General Smuts told me, the problem was equally grave; moving pictures were doing us no good in Johannesburg, with its big Kaffir population. In the West Indies, again, right under my own eyes, I have sensed the damage we were doing ourselves by these emotional films which could not but indicate to the native mind that we were not all we pretended to be.

For a country which possesses no Empire, and does not want one, as is the case with the United States, film factories are merely a prosperous national industry. I have spoken to several of our Colonial Governors on the subject; one and all were agreed that drastic measures should be taken by the British Commonwealth to exercise a strict censorship of the films exported to the Empire. Pictures make an instant appeal to the most untutored mind, infinitely more so than the printed word. A mere child can appreciate their significance.

The time was ripe was something to be done. Practically all the Dominion Prime Ministers were in London and we saw them about the matter. One and all were completely sympathetic. Swaffer and I, for instance, went up to Regent's Park to see Mr. W. M. Hughes, the Australian Premier. It had not occurred to him, for White Australia had no native problem. Neither had New Zealand, as Mr. W. F. Massey, the burly Ulsterman who was head of the government, pointed out to me. But he fully agreed that the time was not far distant when all such questions should receive serious consideration; he would support any proposals which might achieve the desired end.

Sir Robert Borden, the Canadian Prime Minister, didn't appear to like films any way. He was one of those dour Scots, sparing of speech, but very much to the point in what he said. He thoroughly disapproved of moving pictures.

Hollywood, of course, had not then come into being, nor had the "talkies" been thought of. But Swaffer, to give him his due, saw it all coming and we ran a strong campaign which, like many more crusades, had the fault of being before its time. Ten years later, if the Home Government had been alive to the peril, something might have been done to avert an evil which has since caused us incalculable harm.

The problem is one that concerns the Colonies, and cer-

tainly India, more than the big Dominions, with the exception of South Africa. One of these fine days, it may be the subject of discussion between the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of this country.

All that eventuated at the period to which I am referring, 1917-18, was the pleasure of meeting these Empire statesmen. General Smuts I found a spare, soldier-like figure, fair-bearded, inclined to be reticent and very much to the point in all he said. Looking at him, it was difficult to believe that this was the man who had prosecuted the notorious Franz von Veltheim, the German adventurer who shot Woolf Joel in Johannesburg in 1898. Yet such was the case; Smuts was then the State Attorney of the Transvaal Republic, at a very early age for such a post.

General Botha came to London as well; I went along to the Savoy to see him, to find a huge fellow with the constitution of an ox. He had the Boer dislike of talking; what you got out of him, had to be extracted.

The New Zealand Prime Minister, "Bill" Massey, was, on the other hand, the quintessence of geniality, only too ready to help the Press. Swaffer and I frequently lunched with him, as we did with Lord Morris, the Newfoundland Prime Minister.

Mr. Hughes, of course, was an inspiration to any journalist. I happened to be talking to him in the garden of the house he had rented at Regent's Park and from him I learnt something I have since discovered to be true of most Labour statesmen—that a few years of ruling a country completely changes their ideas, previously revolutionary. "Responsibility is a wonderful teacher," admitted Mr. Hughes. "You can't spend money just as your Party thinks fit." That, no doubt, was why the Australian Labour Party ultimately discarded him, in precisely the same way as the Labour Party in England repudiated Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Philip Snowden.

And I am quite sure that the same change is now occurring in Russia with the Soviet rulers. Theory is one thing, practice another. I remember John Hodge, the Minister of Pensions, telling me that he had been touring the country listening to the grievances of men who considered they had been badly treated. He came back to London, having some-

what rashly promised the increase of certain pensions, making a considerable addition to the already formidable bill that had to be met annually. I fancy it was about £350,000 a year.

He was in the House of Commons when Mr. Bonar Law, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, caught sight of him.

"Come here, John," said the Chancellor grimly. "I want to talk to you."

"He did," said Mr. Hodge, relating to me the story. "For about an hour he gave me the finest dressing down that one man could give another, all about the iniquity of promising money that wasn't mine to give."

I am not quite sure, but I believe the Treasury had a little joke with the jovial John; they used to send him a bill for the amount every year.

In the autumn of 1917 the most interesting experience of my life came to pass. There arrived in London, as an exile from the now-disrupt land of the Czars, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies—General Basil Gourko.

I was sent along to see if he would be interviewed and was received with the greatest possible cordiality. He was staying at the Hyde Park Hotel with his wife, having just been brought to England in a cruiser, after being held as a prisoner for some months in the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul, Petrograd.

A pen-picture of this remarkable man may not be out of place, the more so as his coming created an immense sensation at the time.

He was not the accepted Slavonic type; far from it, indeed. Short, with very high cheek bones and intensely piercing eyes, with unmistakable authority written over every movement, he spoke quite good English and discussed with every freedom all that had taken place in Russia both before and since the Revolution of March 1917.

Without knowing for certain, I would have said he was Tartar in origin; however, he was a soldier of great renown in Russia, as his father had been before him in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877. Gourko was the cavalry leader of the vanguard in the Russian descent into East Prussia in August

1914. He rose rapidly, becoming army commander, Chief of the General Staff, and then Commander-in-Chief of the Western Front, with 5,000,000 men under his command.

Repeatedly had he attempted to warn the Czar of the trouble that was brewing; as he told me, the Czarina would invariably interrupt these confidential talks, possibly with no ulterior motive, but in a manner which clearly indicated how strongly he was dominated by her will.

It was a sorry story; criminally unequipped armies, German propaganda disrupting the morale of the troops, politicians rotten with corruption, everybody fighting with each other. He blamed Alexander Kerensky, the head of the first Provisional Government, for the grossly inefficient way he had handled the agitators in the first days of the Revolution, and Kerensky had retaliated by imprisoning him in SS. Peter and Paul. Through the intervention of Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador, he had eventually been released and permitted to leave for England; and here he was in London with his wife, with nothing to live on but the jewels she had managed to smuggle out of the country. Madame Gourko was a striking woman to meet; she had been at one time a Maid of Honour at the Imperial Court. She spoke flawless English; the thought occurred to me how clever these people were, speaking half a dozen languages with ease. Gourko himself was fluent in eight tongues!

I had the privilege one night of accompanying him to Buckingham Palace, where he had an audience with the King. He was dressed for the occasion in full uniform, with all his orders and medals on his chest, astrakhan cap on head, and a heavy sword. I waited outside in the cab I had called for him, and though I naturally did not ask him what his Majesty had said, I gathered that it would be difficult for him to make any plans for the future.

So, indeed, it proved. Matters lay more in the hands of the French. Gourko went over to Paris to see whether he could induce the Clemenceau Government to intervene in Russian affairs. But by that time the October Revolution had come along; the Bolsheviks were in power, and it was soon brought home to both France and Britain, through the medium of two Missions which went to Moscow, that no reliance whatever was to be placed at that time on the Soviets.

Early in 1918 I suggested to the General that he should write his Memoirs. He was agreeable to the project and to that end I went over to Paris, not, however, without some trouble. Special permission had to be obtained from our War Office and Gourko had to write to Viscount Milner, then Secretary for War, before I could go.

We stayed at the Elysée Palace Hotel in the Champs Elysée and for a month or two it was nothing but hard work, interspersed with making the acquaintance of many famous Russians who had also fled their native land. I met the Grand Duke Nicholas, the uncle of the Czar, a giant of a man who utterly overshadowed the slightly-built Gourko. I met General Millar, one of Gourko's subordinates, who had played a prominent part in the operations on the Northern Front.

Looking at him as he came along to the hotel one morning and stayed for lunch, it was intriguing to think that this man, who was attired in a morning coat and striped trousers such as a successful lawyer would wear, was the soldier who had performed marvels of heroism in the terrible winter of 1916-17, which had broken down the Russian morale. Black-bearded, fresh-complexioned, and very approachable, he made a most favourable impression on me. Some few years later, as may still be remembered, he was kidnapped in Paris and has never been seen from that day to this.

He was then, I believe, the military hope of the Russian royalists living in the French capital, headed by the late Grand Duke Cyril, claimant to the Russian throne.

Paris was none too pleasant in those days. Ludendorff was having his last fling; the grand offensive of March 1918 was crushing all before it and one never knew when Paris itself might be threatened. There had been proposals to form a Russian Legion to fight on the Western Front, which reached the length of 10,000 men being under arms. But who should command this force was a question which seemed to arouse bitter dissension. Gourko himself was the obvious choice; but Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, was violently opposed to the idea. The "Tiger" held the opinion that Gourko was much to blame for the downfall of Russia, and in the end the Legion, after being held in a sort of concentration camp, was disbanded without ever striking a blow. No one in England heard anything of these matters, but I did,

for Gourko's sitting-room in our suite raged with the discussions of the disgruntled leaders.

The Supreme War Council was permanently in session and Gourko attended many meetings there with, I believe, only Sir Henry Wilson as a friend. Clemenceau's ideas were simple enough; the Russian Legion must be placed entirely under French command, as Foch and Pétain insisted.

Tragedy overtook poor Gourko in the midst of all this disgraceful squabbling and intrigue. His good-looking, charming wife, anxious to play her part whatever the scene, volunteered to take charge of an ambulance section on the French Front. There, to the unutterable grief of the General, she was killed by a shell.

I had gone back to London at the time and was myself deeply grieved at this culminating tragedy. Not until the autumn of 1918, when the firm of John Murray were ready to bring out Gourko's book, did I see the General again. He was a broken man and I thought to myself that Providence could hardly have any further trials in store for him. I found him a furnished flat in London, one of those uncomfortable places where food is served on the premises. There he stayed for a few months, meeting daily the prominent Russian emigrés who had also fled to England.

Hopes ran high with him in 1919 when Mr. Churchill attempted to restore the status quo in Russia through the medium of the Murmansk Expedition led by General Sir William Ironside. However, Whitehall decided that no Russian officers were to go in anything but a junior capacity, as was the case with the attack from the South led by General Denikin.

It is hard to say at this stage what might have happened to the world if the Bolsheviks *had* been overthrown in 1919. The real trouble, of course, was that neither France nor America wanted to have anything to do with the project, though American troops were sent into Siberia, through Vladivostock. But it all ended abortively; by the end of 1919, the Russians were being left to manage their own affairs. Ironside came home, the Denikin force petered out; there was more trouble close home with the Poles.

We also had a few domestic affairs to occupy our minds. First of all there was the police strike, then the infinitely

more serious outbreaks among the railwaymen and the miners.

As 1918 was drawing to a close, Hannen Swaffer retired from the Editorship of the *Weekly Dispatch*, in favour of Bernard Falk, who had been our political writer.

Mr. Falk is a Manchester man who has written, among other books, a very entertaining volume called *He Laughed in Fleet Street*. This accurately reflects his attitude towards modern-day journalism, which must not be taken too seriously. As Mr. Falk and I know each other intimately, I can safely say that he possesses a mordant sense of humour which is a most useful asset in that street where the ink and the anguish flow.

He remained Editor of the *Sunday Dispatch*, as it was renamed during his reign, for thirteen years, which breaks all records. There were unkind critics who called us the *Weakly Dispatch*, and this was more than Falk could stand.

Falk's journalistic proclivities were largely political; he had a "feature" called Secret History, mainly devoted to the doings of the Asquithian Liberals who were supposed to be plotting the downfall of the Coalition Government. Readers may remember them as the Wee Frees. I don't know whether Mr. Asquith himself controlled their activities; it was a perpetual mystery to me. Two of the leading lights among the conspirators, J. M. Hogge and W. M. R. Pringle, used to come into the office and tell us what was going on behind the scenes.

However, we had one or two bright sparks on the staff—Harry Ainsworth, who later became Editor of *John Bull* and the *People*, Peter Singleton Gates and myself. We supplied that variety which is reputed to be the spice of life.

Falk had at one time run a paper for William Randolph Hearst, called the *London Budget*. This tragically-brief effusion specialized in famous names; the order went forth that we were to go and do likewise. One beautiful "stunt" I have cause to remember concerned the alleged indecency of modern women's dress. Skirts were getting shorter and shorter and the men began looking longer and longer. I had to find a peer or two who would denounce this unseemly craze.

My first victim was the then Lord Willoughby de Broke, a sporty old nobleman whom I caught going into the Painted Chamber one afternoon. I told him the burden of my complaint; he looked me witheringly up and down, then he said: "What a pity Lord Northcliffe can't find something better for an intelligent young man like you to do. Good afternoon." However, I had better luck with one or two elderly peeresses.

I went along to see a certain Cabinet Minister—the name had better be kept a secret—whom I induced to write a series of articles describing his life in the government. They made good reading, even if they did evoke from Mrs. Asquith a protest about Ministers revealing skeletons in the political cupboard.

We had a visit from Horace Rayner, the man who shot William Whiteley, the Universal Provider. He had just been released from prison after serving twelve years' penal servitude. A more pitiable wreck of a man I never saw; he had never properly recovered from the attempt at suicide which he made at the time of the crime and it was no great surprise to me when he died shortly afterwards.

Mr. Lloyd George's Cabinet Ministers were very accessible those days; we had many a notable contribution from men like Sir Robert Horne, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, Sir Eric Geddes and some of the Labour Ministers. When Mr. Baldwin came into office all these things were rendered taboo; in future, no Minister must write for the Press.

Sir Robert Horne I found an exceedingly able man, impressive in his appearance and the essence of good nature. I came to make his acquaintance through the medium of Sir George Younger, who told me one day to go and see him, adding: "He will probably be Prime Minister before long."

I think the Tories had him in mind as Premier when the Coalition broke up, for it was known even then that Mr. Bonar Law was not particularly anxious to go to No. 10. I persuaded Sir Robert to write an article for the *Dispatch* and when I went to get it, about half-past eight at night, he remarked: "Can you tell me why I am doing this and missing my dinner?"

"It's all in a good cause," I said.

Lord Dalziel, who was a perfect mine of information on

such matters, informed me that the reason Sir Robert never became Prime Minister was because Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd George enticed him away from the Tories. According to Henry, they used to ask Sir Robert to come into No. 10 of a night and sit by the fireside with them—Sir Robert being a bachelor with no home of his own in London. This made the pundits of Great Smith Street a bit dubious about him, though he did afterwards become Chancellor of the Exchequer.

However, Sir Robert went out of politics altogether; he migrated to the City, became director of many companies and died leaving quite a respectable little fortune behind him.

Another outstandingly talented man I met was Sir Auckland Geddes, professorial in his attitude towards life, but undoubtedly the possessor of a first-class brain. He was one more of "L.G.'s" discoveries. Sir Auckland was the man who had been sent over to France in 1915, to report on Sir John French after the disastrous battle of Loos. It was on his advice, I believe, that French was brought home, to be superseded by Haig.

As the former Principal of McGill University in Canada, he could hardly be accounted a politician, which was nothing against him. Very tall, inclined to be bald, and sallow of face, he made a lasting impression on me. He told me—and I am revealing no State secrets by saying it now—that Haig would never have seen the war through as Commander-in-Chief if there had been another suitable man to replace him. Also, that the Government were mightily afraid of risking a second big naval battle like Jutland, with Beatty in command.

Still, you hear these things and, *en passant*, I might explain that friction between governments and their commanders is always painfully common in a great war. Haig, for his part, as he made known through his famous Diaries edited by Mr. Duff Cooper, was uncompromising in his hostility towards Mr. Lloyd George, and remained so to the end.

He greatly resented the imputations cast against him of not having achieved decisive victory at the end of the Somme campaign of 1916; more than once did he inform Whitehall that he was ready to resign if the Lloyd George Government

did not approve of him. Again, he spoke bitterly of world battles being run by newspaper proprietors, and everybody knew whom he had in mind.

The end of the war brought to a head a long-simmering grievance on the part of the Metropolitan Police. They were wretchedly paid, their conditions of service were simply archaic. Loyally enough they made no trouble during the war, but the moment it was over, the secretly-formed Union, run by an ex-policeman named Jack Hayes, burst into action. Hayes was a dark-moustached man who had the gift of oratory, as I knew from experience; I once rode about London with him on top of a bus, while he dilated long and fiercely about the wrongs of the men in blue.

Sir Edward Henry, the Commissioner, found himself unable to cope with the trouble. Hundreds of policemen actually went on strike and the situation began to grow really serious. Bolshevism was very much in the air; the Government resolved to take strong measures. Preliminarily, therefore, Sir Edward Henry resigned and the Adjutant-General at the War Office, Sir Nevil Macready, took charge.

Sir Nevil I found a man of parts, as befitted the son of the famous actor. Tall and lean, with a mobile, clean-shaven face and a crisp, staccato way of speaking, he was palpably one to stand no nonsense. When I entered his office, I noticed that the front of his desk was covered with contents bills of the old *Daily Herald*, whercon the progress of the strike was being faithfully recorded.

"That'll show 'em," he said to me with a chuckle. "Every time they come in here, they'll know I'm up-to-date."

I got to know Sir Nevil rather well; he had no time at all for official starch. He, too, had a grievance, as he candidly informed me. All through the war he had wanted a command; the powers that be found him much too valuable as Adjutant-General. However, Mr. Lloyd George had sent for him to settle the police strike and he had accepted the post, after two hours' argument, on the understanding that when he had accomplished the task, he was to go to Ireland as Commander-in-Chief. The Sinn Feiners were once more getting troublesome. He got his way, one is glad to record.

The strike was happily settled and, as a tailpiece, I should like to mention that Mr. Jack Hayes settled down into a perfectly respectable Member of Parliament and actually became Vice-Chamberlain to his Majesty the King. After that, who can say we are not a democratic race?

CHAPTER V

WINSTON CHURCHILL AND OTHERS. OUTWITTING OF GERMAN SPIES

THIS book is not intended to be merely a recital of the events that were occurring just then. What I am trying to do is to depict the outstanding personalities I have encountered in the course of my life. That one should meet many of them was more or less inevitable in one's "Search for Sensation".

Early in 1919, it was suggested by the Editor of the *Dispatch* that a few articles from Mr. Winston Churchill would be of great interest to the world. He was then holding the dual post of Minister for War and Minister for Air. An appointment was made by his personal private secretary, Mr. Edward Marsh, for me to see him at the War Office one afternoon at half-past two.

I was put into a waiting-room, crowded with unfortunate Generals, who I presume were about to undergo that painful process which is now wittily described as being "bowler-hatted". They did not seem over-pleased when Mr. Marsh singled me out and said that Mr. Churchill would not be able to keep his appointment; I had better go down to the House of Commons and catch him in his private room after question time—about half-past four.

Patiently, therefore, I awaited his arrival, not, I must confess, without a good deal of curiosity. He came in and briskly asked what we had in mind. I found him impressive to a degree, a man who went direct to the point and was impatient of wasting time. We concluded our business and I then ventured to ask him something which he might well have told me had nothing to do with me.

A few nights previously, I had met J. P. Mannock, the well-known billiards player and the uncle of Major Edward

("Pat") Mannock, the famous flying ace who had been killed on the Western Front with eighty-two German machines to his credit officially, and probably many more unknown. Poor Mannock had died a spectacular death chasing a Hun to the ground, and though he had received practically all the decorations an airman could receive, the greatest prize of all, the V.C. was missing.

I took the liberty of telling Mr. Churchill all about this; that if anything could be done about a posthumous award, Mannock's old mother would be a happy woman for the rest of her days. Mr. Churchill nodded approvingly. "I will see what can be done," he said. "Let me have the full particulars."

With that I departed. From J. P. Mannock I obtained all that was necessary and, some few weeks later, the dead airman's mother went to Buckingham Palace to receive from the King the posthumous V.C., the D.S.O. with two Bars and the M.C. and Bar that had been awarded to her son. It was indeed kind of Mr. Churchill, but only typical of him. About him there is a human touch that very few statesmen bother to cultivate.

The great coal strike that year brought me into contact with Mr. Robert Smillie, the President of the Miners' Federation. To read the things that were said about him in the Tory Die-hard Press, you would have imagined him to be a fearsome revolutionary. Actually, he turned out to be a mild-mannered man, grizzled with the worrying life he had led, but eminently reasonable in all he said and did.

During the negotiations then going on in London with the Government, he stayed at the Hotel Russell in Bloomsbury, and I had the pleasure of entertaining him and Mr. Frank Hodges to lunch. Mr. Smillie told me of a convincing move he had made to prove to the Government that the appalling conditions the miners were working under, especially in the Scottish coalfields, could not be tolerated any longer.

"I took," he said, "Sir Robert Horne and Mr. Bonar Law up to a village I knew well, where the miners and their families lived in one room, men, women and children. They lived there, and they died there.

"I showed them the washing in the one room, the food

being cooked there, the beds in the corners. I showed them, at the bottom of the street, the filthy lavatory that was used by hundreds of human beings, irrespective of sex, and I asked them if such things were to be allowed in the twentieth century. Mr. Bonar Law and Sir Robert Horne were completely horrified; they never knew how bad were the conditions under which these poor people lived."

Mr. Smillie, to my way of thinking, is a shining example of the British Labour leader. He would take no government post, though many were offered him. The mine-owners greatly respected him, as the Duke of Northumberland candidly informed me one afternoon at Westminster. He wanted nothing but justice for his men; he was content to live in a small house and, when the time came for him to retire, to exist on the modest pension that the Federation granted him.

And that applies, let me say, to most of the Labour men I have known for thirty years. Mr. Arthur Henderson was a character you could not but admire. Sparing of speech, very blunt in his manner, but strikingly sincere, he was a fine man to lead Labour out of the wilderness. So were George Barnes and John Hodge, the latter of whom imparted to me in his broad Doric that his union, the Steel Smelters, had never had a strike.

Once I asked him to have a cigarette. "No, thanks," he grunted, pulling out his beloved pipe, "I don't smoke stationery."

During the railway strike I had an experience which still makes me laugh. I had gone down to the Board of Trade offices one Saturday night to find out what was happening at a meeting of the railwaymen. They were still in session and I waited to catch someone who could enlighten me. At that moment, Sir Albert Stanley (now Lord Ashfield), the President of the Board of Trade, came in after having some supper and very kindly asked me if he could help. I told him my troubles and he said: "Wait a minute. I'll go inside and see how they are getting on."

Patiently I bided my time, to be interrupted by someone who came out of the room and inquired: "Excuse me, but are you Mr. Thomas's chauffeur?" Modestly enough, I hope, I disclaimed the honour.

Poor old J.H. had a very bad time over this strike; there were violent elements among the railwaymen who were threatening him with physical retribution for not getting them all they wanted. Unity House was a contradiction in terms those days, or, as Mr. Churchill would describe it, a "terminological inexactitude".

When Lord Lee presented Chequers to the nation for the use of the Prime Minister, I telephoned him asking whether I might come out to see him. We were no strangers to each other, for during the time he was Director of Food Production in Mr. Lloyd George's government I had frequently met him. Also, I had another interest in the matter. In the early days of the war, when I was in the 21st Division, I had actually camped in the grounds of this historic house, but never been inside the house.

I received a cordial invitation to come out; it was, I remember, a bitterly cold day, with snow deep on the ground. His lordship sent an old "Tin Lizzie" to meet me at Aylesbury—cars were still scarce—and we whizzed back to Chequers with a wind that fairly cut you in two. However, a stiff whisky improved matters and I was then better able to appreciate the beauties of this unique mansion with its Cromwellian portraits and relics, especially the great square, galleried hall, all panelled in old oak.

I asked Lord Lee what he would think if one day this gem of Tudor architecture were to be occupied by a Labour Prime Minister.

"All I can say to that," he replied, "is that houses such as these will help the Labour people to understand what old England really means."

Five years later, my little proposition came true. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald went to Chequers as first Labour Prime Minister of Britain.

Lord Lee had had a romantic career. The son of a clergyman, he became an artillery officer and, following this, military attaché at Washington. He married in New York the beautiful Miss Moore, daughter of a famous and wealthy New Yorker.

He represented still another of the clever men that Lloyd George found to run the country during the Great War.

One other notable occasion was when I journeyed down to St. Leonards to interview the novelist we all knew so well as children—Sir Rider Haggard. He lived at a place called North Lodge, an old stone house partly built over an archway. The author of *She*, *King Solomon's Mines* and *Allan Quartermain* was a man to remember. Extremely tall, stooping slightly and with a greying beard, he had the most beautiful blue eyes I have ever seen in a man.

His manners were exquisite, his heart full of goodness towards his fellow-beings. What I wanted to see him about was migration within the Empire, on which he had recently delivered an address to some society in London. It was the one passionate ambition of his life; he told me he feared that unless we did something to populate properly our vast empty spaces, the time would not be far distant when our Empire would begin to vanish. And how nearly true all that has come since!

"You know," he went on, "I have spent practically all my money on this project of mine; I have travelled all over the Empire and done all I could to make the government see the force of my scheme. But it seems that my work must go for nothing."

I had lunch there and afterwards Sir Rider walked up to the Warrior Square station with me. I bade him good-bye feeling how strange it was that such men should labour in vain. He and Kipling were twin souls in this problem of Empire.

In contradistinction to men like them, there was one of the Australian Labour Premiers—he was doing himself very well at the Savoy—who was exceedingly anxious to investigate the mysteries of Bolshevism. Whether he proposed to introduce it to his satellites he didn't say; what agitated his mind was the fact that the government wouldn't give him a permit to go to Russia just then. Did I know of any way?

I told him no return tickets to Moscow were being issued; he must take pot-luck about getting back, as had some of our own Bolshies. Nobody would guarantee his safety, as he seemed to think desirable. "Furthermore," I said, "don't think of going to Moscow in those clothes!" He had just been along to Savile Row.

One more, and finish. I had the task of lurching still

another of these Australian politicians—also Labour. I took him along to Simpson's in the Strand and before doing so told the famous Nat Wheeler that he must produce the fatted calf. It was all on the office.

Nat surpassed himself. He gave us *Saumon Truite*, done to a turn; *Mouton a la Simpson's*, a wonderful sweet, a superb Welsh rarebit. We had a bottle of wine, coffee, liqueur brandy and a Corona apiece. Nat came along with red, beaming face to ask if everything had been to our satisfaction. Was there anything more we would like?

"I wonder," said my guest, "whether I might have a cup of tea?"

Nat looked at him for a moment, speechless. Then he managed to ejaculate "Good Gawd" and disappeared.

I saw Georges Chicherin and Maxim Litvinoff going back to Russia, the former in a ready-made suit and a green velour hat specially bought for him at a West End shop. Little did I think, watching them in the charge of old Superintendent Quinn, of Scotland Yard's Special Branch, that both these men were destined to play important parts in the making of the new Russia. Chicherin became the first Foreign Commissar of the Soviet Government, Litvinoff followed him. I had a word or two with Chicherin before he boarded the Newcastle-bound train and, to give him his due, he bore us no grudge for the somewhat cavalier way we had treated him.

We, or rather certain people in England, had Bolshevism on the brain those days, as I shall shortly show.

Northcliffe was a tremendous figure, in my opinion one of the few great men of the present century. Yet he failed in what was perhaps the outstanding ambition of his life, not through any fault of his own, but simply because he was a powerful newspaper proprietor. Statesmen all the world over don't like having their policy and actions dictated by the Press—which is only right and proper.

The start of Northcliffe's failure was a trifle peculiar. As will be remembered by most of the older generation, there took place, at the end of the Great War, what was described as the Khaki, or Coupon, Election. The candidates supporting the Lloyd George Coalition Government were facetiously

reported to have received a coupon which certified them to be the only people worth voting for; all substitutes must be refused. Unfortunately for Mr. Lloyd George, there was an undue number of Tories among these Simon Pures and he was more than a little apprehensive that if they were all returned, his days as Prime Minister would not be long in the land.

Northcliffe, for his part, did not wish to see an out-and-out Tory Government in office, for that would mean the end of the great influence he was then wielding in political circles. So a gentleman's agreement was entered into; as a *quid pro quo* for whole-hearted support of the Lloyd George Government, he was to be a delegate to the Peace Conference, and furthermore, according to what Sir George Younger told me, he would have a voice in the composition of the new Cabinet.

Those things did not come to pass. Without warning, and for reasons unbeknown to any but one or two people in Carmelite House, there suddenly broke out in the three Northcliffe papers—the *Daily Mail*, *Evening News* and *Weekly Dispatch*—violent attacks on the recently-formed Coalition Government and Mr. Lloyd George in particular. Where we were once welcome visitors everywhere in Whitehall, our name now became anathema. Enlightenment came peculiarly indeed.

One morning in January 1919, following a blistering attack in one of our papers on what was described as the Tory cabal now dominating British politics, in gross contravention of the agreement which had been entered into by the three parties, Liberal, Unionist and Labour, Sir George Younger rang up and said to the Editor:

"You know, all this business is grossly unfair. If you like to send someone down to see me, I'll tell you all about it."

Falk, I think, knew perfectly well all that was going on behind the scenes. However, he told Sir George Younger that I, with whom he was acquainted, would go down that afternoon. In any case, no harm would be done.

Sir George Younger was, naturally, quite a powerful person in the political world. In addition to being a millionaire brewer, he was, in company with Colonel John Gretton (the Chairman of Bass, Ratcliff & Gretton) one of the men of

supreme influence in the Unionist Party. If you wanted to be a Tory M.P. you might expect to be "vetted" first by Younger or Gretton. Physically he was plump and small and ready to break into a smile any moment—just the man to run a political party.

We had tea together in his office in Westminster, and over it he began the strange story that seemed to be grieving him.

First of all, the Unionist Party was staggered by winning four hundred-odd seats at the General Election; I fancy the exact number was 458. The bargain between Northcliffe and Lloyd George was no great secret and immediately the composition of the incoming Cabinet came up for consideration, it was intimated to the Prime Minister that there would be no question of Lord Northcliffe having any voice in the matter.

Furthermore, though this eventuated later, Northcliffe certainly would not be permitted to take any part in the Peace Conference. He had no official status and his markedly violent anti-Germanism would be sure to create endless trouble.

Some little time elapsed before Northcliffe finally realized that he would be thrown overboard. He was not in the least disposed to take the blow lying down and one Saturday afternoon he arrived at No. 10, Downing Street to say a few words.

What occurred between the two men must have been fairly unpleasant; their dispute terminated with the Prime Minister requesting his lordship to go to a somewhat warmer place than London, and additionally, never to darken his door again.

Northcliffe went, and in going banged the sacred door of No. 10 so loudly that over at Scotland Yard the police on duty thought that someone was dropping a few bombs.

An hour or two later, Mr. Bonar Law came in from the Exchequer office next door and Mr. Lloyd George said to him: "I've just had your friend Northcliffe here and finished up by telling him to go to hell."

"Yes, my dear David," said the gentle-mannered Bonar, "and the unfortunate thing is that he didn't go. He came into my place and gave me hell instead."

Now, there's a funny story, isn't it? We didn't print it, naturally. I suppose I was one of the few in London who knew all the ins-and-outs of this unhappy vendetta which had broken out between these two famous men. It lasted right up to the time of Northcliffe's death and only then did it become revealed that all Sir George Younger had told me was perfectly true.

Looking back on the event after a lapse of more than twenty years, it seems a thousand pities that Northcliffe didn't go to the Peace Conference, and, what is more important, that he was not entrusted with the task of seeing that the terms of the Treaty were properly enforced. We should almost certainly have been spared the present war.

As for Sir George Younger, he was created a Viscount, left just on a million, and lived long enough to see the Tory Party obliterate the Liberals as a political entity. He had a very neat wit. Some time in 1919, when the strength of beer was agitating the minds of the British proletariat—we were still getting the government stuff described as "all legs and arms and no body"—I ran into him near the House of Commons.

"Just the man I wanted to see," I said. "What about writing us an article on something you understand—beer?"

He patted me lightly on the shoulder and as he skipped nimbly on his way, remarked: "I'm very sorry, my boy. The subject isn't of sufficient gravity."

We published in the *Dispatch*—Falk had a fondness for these journalistic features—a symposium on "Will the submarine oust the battleship?" A symposium, for the benefit of the ignorant, is a collection of people's views on a matter they are supposed to know all about.

Six Admirals were wanted, quite a formidable task. I went first to the House of Lords to see Lord Fisher, the redoubtable "Jacky", he with a face like a Japanese gargoyle and a holy terror to poor politicians. He used to go into the Lords of an afternoon, having retired from the Navy.

"Submarines versus battleships!" he snorted as I stopped him. "If you were to print in your paper what I think about that matter, and the people who think they can run 'em, they'd have you locked up next day."

With that, he went on his way. I had forgotten that when

he was First Sea Lord, he had been the pioneer of the Dreadnoughts. He didn't live long enough to see the beginning of the end of capital ships, for the torpedo-bomber was then unheard of.

I called upon Fisher's arch-enemy, Lord Charles Beresford, address No. 1, Great Cumberland Place. A terrific noise was going on somewhere inside. The butler said: "For heaven's sake, don't bother the Admiral to-day; he's fair mad about something."

Thereupon I came up at the Portman Square house of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Hedworth Meux, M.P. for Portsmouth, chief legatee of the famous Lady Meux (widow of Sir Henry Meux, Bt.) and one of nature's gentlemen. His reaction to the problem was quite frank and definite; he hadn't given it a thought. However, we talked it over—I had to get something and the hour was growing late—and eventually got to talking about politics. He informed me, *inter alia*, that no one in the House ever took him seriously; he was always referred to as the breezy Admiral.

I stayed so long that he said: "Well, you'd better have some dinner." About half-past nine I began to grow anxious.

"What about that article of mine?" I inquired.

"Oh, write something and let me have a look at it in the morning."

At 10 o'clock the following day I turned up with his views on submarines v. battleships. He came down in his dressing-gown, glanced through the article, and said: "There's only one thing wrong with it. People will say 'Too bloody clever for Hedworth Meux'."

Oh yes, we were the Bright Young Things of Fleet Street. I had a minor adventure that year over the Derby. The millionaire trawler man, Sir Alec Black, owned the favourite, The Panther, already an easy winner of the Two Thousand Guineas. Everybody in the country was raving mad about the horse; money for him flowed into the bookmakers like water, and the thought occurred to me that a story of the favourite and how he was bearing up under the strain, would interest our readers. Accordingly I wired Sir Alec Black to ask whether I might have a day with The Panther at New-

market. A message came back: "Delighted. Am advising Manser" (the trainer).

George Manser and the favourite's jockey, J. R. Cooper, I found installed in an exceedingly comfortable house, and it was plain to see that they felt their responsibility. The public don't realize the strain that comes with the charge of a red-hot favourite for a big race. I went into the stables as the horses were being bedded down for the night and if ever I saw a well-trained horse, The Panther was one. But he had his funny little ways. He liked company of a night; if my memory is correct, there was a goat nosing around the box. And if looks went for anything, the Derby of 1919 was already won; you couldn't fault the horse.

Next morning Manser kindly gave me a mount; we rode over to the Limekilns to see the horses at work, an inspiring sight, believe me, watching dozens of expensive thoroughbreds coming towards you in the bright morning air.

I am relating this story because of what *did* happen in the Derby that auspicious year. There was only a small field and The Panther, by all the canons of the Turf, should have won in a hand canter. He did nothing of the sort; when the starting gate went up, he suddenly decided to have nothing to do with the affair. Cooper sent him after the others with all the skill at his command, but as they flashed past the winning-post, Lord Glanely's Grand Parade was in front, followed by Lord Astor's Buchan, and Sir Walter Gilbey's Paper Money, with The Panther a respectful distance in the rear.

Even that did not exhaust the drama. Lord Glanely had two runners in the race, the other being the black colt Dominion. The stable jockey, Arthur Smith, had his choice of the two. He decided on the wrong 'un, as jockeys frequently do. Years afterwards, Donoghue told me that if he had been riding the second, Buchan, no Grand Parade would have won the Derby of 1919.

Well, the obvious thing to do was to interview Lord Glanely. He kindly invited me to visit him at Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, where we toasted Grand Parade in right royal fashion with a bottle of Cordon Rouge. I heard all about the winner's romantic history, how his dam, Grand Geraldine, had at one time pulled a farmer's cart in Ireland.

His lordship, better known up to then as Sir William Tatem, the Cardiff shipping millionaire, was naturally jubilant, and I am afraid that in the article I wrote for the *Weekly Dispatch*, entitled "Luck", I gave the impression that winning the Derby was quite a simple matter.

This merely served to show that it doesn't do to take Dame Fortune for granted. For a good many years following Grand Parade's success, Lord Glanely could hardly do right. He laid out vast sums of money on a breeding establishment, but until Colombo came along in 1934, after an unbeaten two-year-old career which seemed to indicate that all the Classics were at his mercy, the Derby continued to elude him. He was deprived—I almost said robbed—of the Blue Riband that year, in circumstances which subsequently came before the Stewards of the Jockey Club. However, nothing was done and Lord Glanely lived to fight another day.

It's all in the game. Much about this time, J. B. Joel, another millionaire owner, sold his Prince Palatine, to the French Duc Decazes, for £25,000, and in doing so, as he forcefully informed me on the telephone from Childwick Bury, shook hands with himself. In a rash moment he had purchased this smashing good horse from Mr. Thomas Pilkington, the Lancashire glass manufacturer, for £40,000, till then the greatest price ever paid for a racehorse.

Prince Palatine, by Persimmon out of Lady Lightfoot, turned out an arrant failure at stud. In England he never got anything a quarter as good as himself. In this respect he strongly resembled his distinguished sire, the property of King Edward VII. Persimmon sired but two animals approaching his own merit, though to be sure they were both pretty good—Sceptre and Prince Palatine.

As Mr. Joel told me that night, the Royal Stud at Sandringham was utterly ruined by Persimmon; the King's yearlings by him were persevered with until our popular monarch hardly knew what it was to win a race. Mr. Joel, for his part—and he was no fool about horse-breeding—said he had no intention of allowing Prince Palatine to ruin *his* fine stud.

He turned out to be right. In France, the mighty Prince emulated Persimmon; he sired but two horses anything like himself—Rose Prince, who came to England to win the

Cesarewitch, and Prince Rose, the winner of many big races on the Continent.

And so we go on! The Turf is a world all its own.

You meet many notabilities in a journalistic career if you are an "outside" man. I have never been anything else, nor desired to be. The years immediately following the Great War produced innumerable vivid personalities whose names loomed large in the public eye and I came into contact with dozens of them. Sir John Ellerman remains well-fixed in my mind, a strangely impassive man, with a black beard turning grey, who would always see you at his office in Moorgate Street without the slightest suggestion that he was worth £40,000,000. He never offered you a cigarette; all he said was: "Well, what can I do for you?" gave you a polite answer when you enlightened him, and then frigidly bade you good morning.

A strange person! I knew his chiropodist, the famous Price. The latter, one morning, broke a bootlace after doing the corns of this modern Croesus. He apologized profusely, knowing his Sir John.

"That's all right," Ellerman said kindly. "You can knot it up."

Still, that's how they make their money. You can't eat your cake and have it. Old Morrison of the Fore Street warehouse, who died a comparatively poor man with a mere £12,000,000, had the habit of rebuking his managers for lunching in the City at the fabulous cost of five shillings.

"Why don't you do as I do?" he demanded.

What he did revealed the secret of his success. He used to go into the street at lunch-time, buy a pound of apples from a barrow for threepence, and then walk back into his office to eat them!

Some of the banking baronets were interesting—Sir Richard Vassar-Smith, the Chairman of Lloyds, a kindly, patriarchal gentleman who would have made a wonderful archbishop. His exact antithesis could be found in the person of Sir Edward Holden of the Midland Bank, a brown-bearded, tight-lipped autocrat with "strictly business" written all over him.

Another man worth meeting was Mr. Gordon Selfridge,

one of the most distinguished-looking men in London, typically American in face and with his white hair, especially in evening dress, a most notable figure at "first nights". I went up to Oxford Street to see him one day; his secretary said ten minutes. Unfortunately, I stayed the better part of two hours hearing from Mr. Selfridge the story of his amazing career, which started in Chicago with Marshall Fields'.

Some time later, he got caught up in that ill-advised boom engineered by James White and others to buy up all the big drapery businesses in the country. Old-established concerns were purchased at all manner of fabulous prices, floated as public companies, while the promoters walked out with handsome profits.

I saw plenty of this in James White's office, one of the homes of the frenzied finance that marked the immediate post-war years. We had another dose of it five years later, and then followed the sensational collapse which cost the poor confiding ones many millions of pounds.

Still, why worry in 1919? Money was to be had for the asking. Woodrow Wilson arrived in London and I watched him drive down The Mall to Buckingham Palace, preceded by the band of the Blues nobly doing its best with the Star-Spangled Banner. London was also chock-a-block with gorgeously-attired Indian princes anxious to safeguard their great possessions in the political upheaval that was taking place over the Peace Conference. Most of them stayed at the Savoy Hotel, for Park Lane was still Millionaires' Mile and the Cecil continued to be Bolo House.

I happened to call at Clarence House to see Sir Malcolm Murray, Comptroller to the Duke of Connaught, and while being seen off the premises by the courteous Sir Malcolm, saw his Royal Highness and the Maharajah of Bikanir come out of the front door. He had a martial figure, this handsome and enormously-rich Indian potentate, and I was also greatly struck by the way he bade farewell to his bare-headed host. He said: "Well, good-bye, Connaught. I expect I'll be seeing you before long."

The *Dispatch* gradually ceased to be the same free and easy Bohemian office that it had been in Swaffer's reign. I

missed the lively nights we used to have in the West End, the Saturday night suppers at the old Wellington restaurant in Fleet Street, kept by an aged Italian named Formaggia. Here one could see that strange creature T. W. H. Crosland, mumbling and grumbling in his soup. He and Swaffer were firm friends. G. K. Chesterton frequently honoured the place with his massive presence; it was a sight for the gods to watch him putting away an enormous meal and then departing ponderously up Fleet Street; clad in his big black cape and equally voluminous black hat. Archibald Bodkin, the famous criminal lawyer, regularly dined at the old Wellington, always pre-occupied. I fancy he used to work all the hours of the clock in the Temple hard by.

Six years afterwards, when he was Director of Public Prosecutions, I had occasion to call upon him anent the Memoirs of Sir Richard Muir, late Senior Counsel to the Treasury. I also took the opportunity of suggesting that one day he might do likewise; he did not seem to approve of the idea.

If I had been gifted with any sense at that time, I would have accepted a chance that caine my way with James White, who was then making the financial welkin ring with companies running into many millions of pounds. He was offered the control of a big publishing house for £150,000 and asked me, with all the papers in front of him, what I thought about the matter.

"It's no good," I told him, which was perfectly true just then. I have since seen that particular company blossom out into one of the biggest in the country, with a capital exceeding £4,000,000! And the head of it is now a peer of the realm.

Towards the end of 1919 there came the opportunity of writing a story that greatly appealed to me. This dealt with the workings of the German Secret Service in England during the war. I had already induced Sir Basil Thomson, the Director of Special Intelligence—a kind of political bureau which had been established by the Lloyd George government to suppress Bolshevism—to write for the *Dispatch* a short series of articles about the German spies who had been through his hands at Scotland Yard, not much, it is true, but enough to make me realize that a thrilling yarn still remained to be told.

"The man you want to see," he informed me when I mentioned my idea, "is Kell."

Colonel Sir Vernon Kell I knew only by repute; however, a meeting was arranged and he very kindly lunched me at the Windham Club in St. James's Square.

I want to say a word or two about this distinguished officer, whom I came to know very well. On the small side, unobtrusive to a degree both in manner and dress, with a somewhat muffled voice, he had been the guiding star of the counter-espionage bureau known as M.I.5 ever since its inception. Once I tried to persuade him to write his Memoirs when he retired. "You will bring my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave," he replied in a letter I still possess.

Kell was thirty years catching German spies and unmasking traitors, and when he died only recently, he carried his intriguing experiences with him. I am inclined to say that no country in the world has ever been better protected against the wiles of foreign agents than Britain, and I know what I am talking about.

As a result of our rendezvous, he agreed that I should be given some material to write a book on the deeds of M.I.5. When this arrived, however, it proved insufficient; I realized that many other people were concerned in this spy-catching side of the war. I made myself known to Brigadier-General Cockerill, the head of all the departments involved. I also became acquainted with the renowned Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, he with the typical blue eyes of the British sailor, white hair and trim figure, who had performed miracles as the chief of the Naval Intelligence Division. A great man, the immortal "Blinker", one of the real winners of the Great War.

There was also "C", the head of *the* secret service, whose job had been putting agents into the enemy country. Talking was not "C's" forte, and besides, as he candidly informed me, it was not his business to disclose names that might bring trouble to their owners. If the people themselves cared to relate their experiences—as many of them did subsequently—well, that was their funeral.

From General Cockerill came one interesting little flashlight on a famous man, Lord Kitchener. He had been ordered to attend upon "K", who was then, of course, Secretary for

War, to report on the precautions being taken against espionage and sabotage. It took some time, the subject naturally being somewhat comprehensive. "K", never remarkable for his patience at the best of times, gradually grew redder and redder in the face.

Banging his desk furiously, Kitchener shouted: "Yes, but what have you done? What have you done? What have you done?"

I went back to Scotland Yard after reconnoitring the field and obtaining all the material possible. Sir Basil Thomson laughed and remarked: "Well, I suppose they've been telling you all sorts of nice things about me?"

"Yes," I said. "They told me you were a nice fellow and all that, but——"

"I know," he replied.

Putting it plainly, I had found quite a pronounced heart-burning over the question of who should have the credit for smashing-up the attempts the Germans made to keep a spy system in Britain. The general opinion seemed to be that "B.T.", as everybody called him, obtained too much of the limelight. These things do happen in war-time, strange to relate.

I told him my predicament and he laughed again. "I don't see any reason at all," he said, "why I shouldn't help you. It's all part and parcel of the war history, and someone ought to write it."

So that was how I came to write the book that created a fairly considerable stir. I called it *German Spies at Bay*, and in a way I became, through no seeking of my own, quite a benefactor to the dozens of authors who subsequently wrote books about spies. As mine contained all the names, dates, places and photographs, it was obviously authentic, and in that capacity was much drawn upon by my fellow-scribes. It even received the honour of being coupled with a long-winded denunciation of Lord Northcliffe, written by someone in Germany who appeared to think I had been responsible for the cold-blooded murder of his innocent countrymen.

Let me say that I have since looked upon all espionage with a far more tolerant eye than when I wrote *German Spies at Bay*. As Sir Vernon Kell once said to me: "We all do it."

I might add that if our secret service in Germany and Japan had been better financed and organized the last six or seven years, we should not be in our present unholy mess.

German Spies at Bay was first published serially in the *Morning Post* and, if I say it as shouldn't, it created a sensation. I've grown more hardened since, but in those days, to see myself billed all over England on posters nine or ten feet high, was indeed a thrill. Apparently it was just the light on the war that the country wanted to hear about.

What *did* disappoint many people was the fact that I had no startling revelations to make concerning highly-placed Anglo-Germans betraying the country of their adoption. The "Hidden Hand" just did not exist, and we suffered not one single act of enemy sabotage throughout the entire war.

This German spy system never achieved any startling results, a fact for which we should be deeply grateful to Sir Vernon Kell. How all this came about harks back to 1911 when, as I related in the opening chapter of this book, the Kaiser honoured us with a visit, and incidentally brought with him a couple of gentlemen from his Admiralty Intelligence Staff in Berlin. While these two officers were in London, staying at a West-End hotel, they drove one midnight to a barber's shop in the Caledonian Road, King's Cross, the owner thereof being one Karl Gustav Ernst.

Ignorant of the risk that they might be followed, as indeed they were, they stayed two hours with Ernst, who lived a Jekyll and Hyde sort of existence. In addition to being a barber, he was also a "letter-box" for the German secret service.

Nobody said a word to the Kaiser's Staff officers; nobody apparently did anything. But from thence onward, every letter that Ernst received was opened by Kell's sleuths and, as they expected, most of them were from Berlin, to be re-posted in London to the gang of spies operating in naval depôts and ports. All these epistles were photographed, put back in their envelopes, and then sent on to the humble hairdresser.

For over three years this intriguing game went on. Ernst harboured no suspicions; neither did the man in Berlin at the back of it all—the same man I met in Potsdam in 1929-30

—Gustav Steinhauer, the so-called master spy of the Kaiser. He, poor fellow, couldn't be blamed in any case for what eventually went wrong; the two aides-de-camp never told him they had called upon Ernst!

Four days before we declared war upon Germany in 1914, Kell gave the order to make a move. Twenty-two enemy agents, and Ernst as well, were arrested simultaneously and our enemies went blind. We got our Expeditionary Force on the Continent unbeknown to the German General Staff, and when von Kluck encountered it at Mons, it proved, as history now knows, the deciding factor in saving the Channel ports.

Out of so little can come so much! If those two prying aides of the Kaiser had not poked their noses in other people's affairs! That, at least, was how the deeply-grieved Steinhauer explained the catastrophe to me. I told all this to Sir Vernon Kell, much to his amusement. He always saw the humorous element that was present in these cuts and thrusts in the dark.

Most of the spies the enemy sent in subsequently were hirelings, or else poor, misled creatures who believed they were rendering their country a service. Wretchedly paid, criminally inefficient, they invariably wrote their own death-warrants by the information they attempted to smuggle out in secret inks and codes. They, too, had to use "letter-boxes", agents in neutral countries who speedily became suspect. With one captured agent, Karl Frederick Muller, we forged his handwriting for many months and drew his money until discovery became inevitable.

Women came here; there was ever a resident lady spy, married to a naturalized Englishman. The latter came to see me when I published *German Spies at Bay*, to see whether I might assist him to obtain a divorce from his erring spouse. She was still in gaol—for we never executed any woman—and I referred the matter to Sir Basil Thomson. However, there was no evidence that could help him. The spy she had worked with, one Georges Breeckow, had left behind him, on going to his death, no traces of the little *affaire de cœur* which had marked his venture in espionage with this Lizzie Wertheim.

Agents arrived from America, mainly neutrals of German

origin. We had a spate of New York journalists in 1916-17, the worst phase of all, for these men had visas to carry them through to the Continent, where they could pass their information on. One or two were laid low; they turned State evidence on being sent back to America when the U.S. came into the war.

Our greatest prize was possibly the notorious Captain Franz von Rintelen, with whom I had a passage-of-arms some few years later. He was betrayed to us by two of his own people—Boy-Ed and von Papen, naval and military attachés respectively in America, whose noses he had foolishly put out of joint.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAW GETS ITS CROOKS. SHARE-PUSHING EXTRAORDINARY

BOLSHIEVISM was a bogey which obsessed the minds of many people in the country, almost continuously from 1917, right up to the time of the famous Arcos raid in May 1927.

One diverting spectacle of this "menace", in which I never believed, was that of dear old George Lansbury dancing madly up Bouverie Street, waving a newspaper above his head, the day the news came through that Lenin and his disciples had brought about the October Revolution.

There were, of course, certain elements in Britain that might be accounted dangerous—the ship-workers on Clydeside, some of the mining districts in South Wales, and a few disgruntled ones at Coventry. We also had in the services what were known as soldiers' and sailors' councils, supposedly on Russian lines.

As soon as the war was over, there was much coming and going between Moscow and London on the part of British Bolshies and, correspondingly, much activity on the part of Sir Basil Thomson and his department. He had the "Red" bee buzzing long and loud in his bonnet. Well as I knew him and liked him, I couldn't credit all the astounding stories he used to relate to people in *very* exalted circles that Britain

was seething with revolution and might well blow up any day.

Thomson's career had been a curious one. The son of an Archbishop of York, he had read for the Bar, gone into the Colonial service, done a few jobs down in the South Seas, and eventually taken service under the Prison Commission. In this capacity he became, among other things, Governor of Dartmoor and Wormwood Scrubs. Tiring of this monotonous, drab life, he joined the Metropolitan Police as Assistant-Commissioner under Sir Edward Henry and devoted himself to the C.I.D. side of Scotland Yard.

When the German spies began to appear, he went across to the Special Branch and took charge there, ably assisted, I should add, by old Patrick Quinn, and J. W. McBrien, two Irishmen who were invaluable to him. He possessed a distinct flair for politics and with many friends both in the Lords and the Commons, he became quite a power in the land.

No sooner had the war ended than the post of Director of Special Intelligence was created for him, with the understanding that he was not to take his orders from the Commissioner of Police, then Sir Nevil Macready, but direct from Downing Street. This arrangement lasted well enough for a time; then doubts began to creep in. Thomson started exercising surveillance over all manner of people prominent in the Labour world; there were strong complaints to the government, much undesirable publicity in certain newspapers, and attempts to abolish this new department, previously unknown in our official existence.

However, nothing definite was done until 1920, when Sir Nevil Macready vacated his Commissionership to go to Ireland, and the question arose as to who should succeed him. He recommended Thomson, who, very foolishly, refused the post. He had £3,000 a year as Director of Special Intelligence and he was quite a powerful figure. Brigadier-General Sir William Horwood, one of the Assistants under Macready, received the appointment and everybody who knew what was going on behind the scenes sat back waiting for the sparks to fly.

The fire smouldered on for quite a time. First of all, Thomson was ordered by the government to subordinate

himself to the new Commissioner; this he refused to do under the terms of his agreement. The old *Daily Herald* continued to gibe at him, with the result that the Home Secretary, Mr. Edward Shortt, attempted to persuade him to resign. He declined to listen.

By now, the Sinn Feiners in England were growing more than a little troublesome. Four of them got into the grounds of Chequers with the intention of assassinating the Prime Minister and, as this was one of Thomson's responsibilities, it was decided that he would have to go. Sir Edward Troup, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Home Office, sent for him one morning to break the news, and from what Sir Basil himself told me, an extremely unpleasant scene took place.

This was a sensation if you like! He went into seclusion at a house he possessed in Dorset and I journeyed down there to hear all the details of this invidious affair. He would not even have a servant in the house for fear of publicity; when I arrived there, he cooked me a pork chop with his own hands, while he narrated all that had occurred. The government had granted him a handsome pension—£1,100 a year, I understood—but nevertheless, he felt deeply galled and humiliated. His dismissal repeatedly came up in the House of Commons; but the Prime Minister would not budge.

There is much more I could disclose about Sir Basil Thomson and his activities subsequent to retiring from Scotland Yard. Generally speaking, I think he was treated very badly indeed. I always thought him an outstandingly able man, who probably lost his head a little over the power that suddenly came into his hands, but still remained a notable figure in the life of London. He had considerable literary skill and when he left England to live in Paris, I frequently visited him for the purpose of getting contributions from his facile pen.

You speak as you find. Hardly anyone disliked him and there was not in the Metropolitan Police, especially among the Criminal Investigation Department, anyone who did not lament his going. He certainly saw the arrant humbugs in high life in their proper light!

Early in 1921 I took up my quarters in historic old Clifford's Inn, a backwater of London with a charm all its

own, especially for a literary man. Never an Inn of Court, it had been one of the old Inns of Chancery and had an ancient Hall whose fame had frequently been extolled by Dr. Johnson.

Clifford's Inn boasted no great size. It possessed three blocks of buildings, besides the Hall; the staircases were rickety, the sanitary arrangements deplorable. Some of the tenants had residential flats and did their shopping up Fetter Lane, where, strange to say, you could buy almost everything. The Willett Estates, founded by the old gentleman who invented daylight saving, owned the property and, I must say, treated us very considerately. For £100 a year and rates I had two excellent, decent-sized offices, quite large enough for all I intended to do.

Windett, the white-whiskered old porter, was a character that might have stepped right out of David Copperfield; his only fault, up to the time that a motor bus killed him one night close to Temple Bar, was that of bringing a convivial friend into my chambers of an evening and occupying my comfortable morocco armchairs, with a bottle or two of beer to while the time away.

Here I worked for the better part of six years, always on the understanding that I might have to leave at any time. None of us had any proper agreement; we were on a three months' lease owing to the fact that the landlords were trying to sell the Inn for development. Why it was never purchased by the City Corporation was a mystery and that did not redound to the credit of our City Fathers. The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments might have intervened to save it; but eventually the Inn became the property of Eyre and Spottiswoode, the King's Printers. They, however, did not proceed with the demolition of the property and the rebuilding of a massive works, as we all expected. I had moved out, as did many other people, only to find that I need not have been in such a hurry. Another three or four years elapsed before the ancient stones came tumbling to the ground and still one more of London's landmarks ceased to be. In its place arrived a huge stone erection of flats and offices, with only a coat of arms and an inscription over the entrance from Fleet Street to tell the world that Clifford's Inn had been there in the days of the Tudor Kings.

I was in Fleet Street, yet out of it. I was handy to all the newspaper offices, quiet and secluded, much happier than I had been on the staffs of the big newspaper firms. The post-war London presented a diverting spectacle for an observant journalist. By the end of 1921 the great financial boom which had existed throughout 1919-20 had come to a dismal end; the misguided ones who had been gambling in stocks and shares found their holdings practically worthless.

London itself was also passing through an unpleasant time. There had sprung up during the war, like toadstools during the night, nauseating vices which had to be stamped out with a firm hand. The cocaine traffic was rampant, and an ugly business it was, with the West End alive with drug touts. Their supplies came in largely through the East End docks, by the medium of Chinese firemen who brought the cocaine from Hamburg. One of my friends in the C.I.D. showed me a dozen packets of the precious "snow" he had seized from an Italian trafficker in Soho. Women died from its effects, like the young actress Billie Carleton.

As usual, no effective law existed to deal properly with the evil. Twelve months' imprisonment represented the maximum penalty, a mere trifle when you calculated the profits being made. I ran a strong Press campaign on this dope scandal and some two or three years later had the satisfaction of seeing the principal offenders receiving four or five years' penal servitude.

Unsavoury night-clubs were almost as bad. The West End was fairly riddled with them; dirty, frowsy, noisome dens where the liquor was bad and the company worse. They were no attraction to the Londoner; all they lived on was fleecing the foreigner and country folk who fondly imagined that this was London life. I had already made the acquaintance of the famous Mrs. Kate Meyrick and never ceased to marvel at this pale, refined-looking woman, the wife of a doctor, who had for reasons best known to herself chosen this way of supporting her children.

Another uncivilizing sight—and one to bear in mind after this war—was the spectacle of dozens of "long-firm fraud" merchants appearing at every Session of the Old Bailey, to be tried by poor old Sir Henry Dickens, who had the patience of Job himself. By the end of 1922, the swindles perpetrated

on the textile trade alone amounted to £5,000,000! I have stood in Dickens' Court and listened dumbfounded to these impudent young crooks talking about deals running into hundreds of thousands of pounds—all vanished into nothingness.

It was organized robbery on the grand scale and the City police never got down to the real offenders. Three years' penal servitude meant little; the game was worth the candle. I have seen an old Polish Jewess in Carey Street, who could hardly speak English, confessing to having obtained credit to the handsome tune of £75,000—all by the “long-firm fraud” which, for the benefit of those who are curious, is worked by establishing confidence by means of false references, preliminary cash payments, and a specious tongue.

The year 1922 was about the peak period. By then, the “get-rich-quick Wallingfords” were beginning to reap the whirlwind. They weren’t the small fry, by any means. Men who had dabbled in millions appeared at the Old Bailey, there to learn that although the mills of God grind slowly, they grind exceeding small. I write of some of these financiers in a later chapter, for their lives are indeed worth the telling.

We also suffered the unpleasant ordeal of our racecourses becoming the stamping ground of hooligan gangs who stabbed, battered and blacknailed all who crossed their path, with an impunity that left you gasping. Not for nothing is England known as the land of the free! Woe betide any newspaper man who ventured to draw attention to the evil. He would be waylaid and beaten up for a certainty.

I had almost forgotten another flourishing industry of those memorable years—fire-raising. The redoubtable Joseph Englestein was the ringleader of an organized gang that got away with £250,000 before Frederick Wensley’s hand fell upon the main offenders. One of the men sentenced with Englestein, a Pole known as Joseph Brust, uttered a cry from the heart as the Recorder of London gave him four years’ penal servitude.

“Vot haf I done?” he wailed. “Vot haf I done? Haf I not been in der country twenty years and neffer done a t’ing der police could find out?”

Well, there’s a wealth of logic in that.

The greater part of my work went into the Sunday Press and I don't mind boasting that I *did* live by the sweat of my brow. There was no big money about as yet; it remained for Mr. J. S. Elias, now Lord Southwood, to come along with the *People* and liven up the G.B.P., otherwise the Great British Public, with some big stories which made people realize that a lot of romance lay behind the lives of the notabilities and notoriety who were hitting the headlines.

Gerard Lee Bevan! There was a tragic romance, if you like. A man of exceedingly good family, the head of a prosperous stock-broking business in the City, suddenly gets seized with the ambition to make a few millions in a few years. He fails, fakes his balance sheets, is taxed with his fraud, and then flees the country, to live like a hunted animal in Austria until he is brought back to stand his trial.

But he had not fled alone. His mistress, a handsome Frenchwoman, had gone with him. She waited for him in Paris until Bevan, free from the sentence of seven years imposed upon him by the acid-faced Avory, divorced by the wife who sat in the court during his trial, could leave England for ever to begin anew the life that was so sadly wasted. He married his Frenchwoman and, on a pension of £1,500 a year provided by his family, spent the remainder of his days in Havana.

I remember him at the Old Bailey only too well, a red-haired, clean-shaven fellow with a rather high voice, standing up in the witness-box for two days to be subjected to a merciless Treasury prosecution which required him to account for a couple of million pounds that were missing from his companies.

Where does all this money go? In Bevan's case, he never had it. Extravagant he may have been, but not to the extent of £2,000,000. Most of these men are merely jugglers; the bulk of their wealth is represented by paper.

I had a visit during my tenure of Clifford's Inn from Thomas Farrow, of banking notoriety. He thought I might pay him a handsome sum for his reminiscences. In his case, at any rate with me, the principle of *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* cannot be applied. A more obnoxious creature I never encountered. Short, squat, with a very large head, and an even larger opinion of himself, he was sorry indeed

for his own troubles, but completely indifferent to the sufferings of the 35,000 poor folk who had entrusted him with their savings.

His *modus operandi* had the virtue of sweet simplicity. He took your money on fixed or current deposit—he wasn't fussy—and promised you five or six per cent interest. This game he carried on for quite a number of years, gambling with his credulous customers' cash until nothing was left to gamble with.

Then he went along to No. 11, Downing Street to make a heart-rending appeal to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to save his bank—and himself. He flung himself on his knees, the tears streaming down his face, as he cried out: "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

The Chancellor told him just one thing; he must suffer the consequences of his crimes.

When he called upon me, after coming out of prison, I informed him he could write me an account of his life, on condition that he told the truth. Not he. The manuscript he presented me with should have been inscribed "Whitewash, by Thomas Farrow".

"You are wasting your time," I said after reading it. "What I, and the public, want to know is what you did with those millions of pounds you handled."

I knew he had gambled the money away, but where and how? He declined to tell. A few years later I saw him at Bognor, living in a tiny bungalow. He was on a shopping expedition, with a cabbage hanging out of a basket. He was back where he had started thirty years before. At Bognor he died, a tragic example of a man who never knew his own limitations. But perhaps that arose because he was just a double-dyed hypocrite, like old Jabez Balfour, who embezzled the money of the poor and pleaded that it was all nothing but legitimate speculation, in which his victims were his partners.

I first had the felicity of meeting Farrow at Risley Hall, Derbyshire, the residence of Mr. Ernest Terah Hooley, one-time millionaire, who possesses the doubtful distinction of being the founder of one modern system of company promoting.

Mr. Farrow was a trifle under the financial weather; he

had called upon Hooley to request the loan of £500. I, for my part, had arrived for the purpose of getting Ernest Terah's colourful reminiscences to give an expectant world. I was in the study when Farrow came and Hooley returned from seeing his visitor with the news that he was desirous of borrowing a "monkey" (Anglice, £500).

"Would you lend it to him?" he inquired. By the look on my face the verdict was a decided "No", whereupon Hooley hastened to add "If you were me."

"Please yourself," said I. "He wouldn't get anything from me." So Farrow went away empty-handed; in the gathering gloom of a September evening, we watched him walking down the drive carrying an attaché case.

"Do you know," I remarked to Hooley, "that fellow has had five or six million pounds through his hands?"

"Good God!" said my host. "If only I had known that in days gone by!"

Hooley's own career is one of the strangest stories ever heard. From being a small stockbroker in Nottingham, he migrated to London to float the biggest financial deal of its kind yet recorded—the £5,000,000 Dunlop Tyre Company, which he had acquired with the assistance of wealthy backers. The purchase price from the Du Cros was £3,000,000; the price to the British public £2,000,000 more. This is called "promotion profit"; it comes off now and again.

Twenty years afterwards, it is not uninteresting to record, when the bulk of the shares of the Dunlop Company had returned to the Du Cros family, Hooley's pet particular pupil in high finance also had the Dunlop Company under his wing. The person in question was the late James White. It merely shows what a wonderful business the Dunlop Company must be to have successfully survived the attentions of both these gentlemen, though to be sure there was a distinct hiatus in its affairs in 1921, when the balance sheet revealed a deficit of £8,000,000.

White had run the capital of the Company up to £20,000,000; he had also involved it in heavy contracts for rubber and cotton, besides expensive building programmes, which were preposterous as prices began to fall. Rubber, for instance, dropped from 3s. a pound to three halfpence. The most influential group of shareholders got

together, kicked White and his satellites out, cut the £1 shares to five shillings and then, under the expert guidance of Sir George Beharrel and Sir Eric Geddes, gradually restored the Dunlop Company to its former prosperity. To-day its position is unchallenged; it dominates the British tyre trade.

I am relating all this, not so much for the purpose of talking about Dunlop's, as to demonstrate that company promoters rarely achieve anything except their own enrichment. They create nothing; all they do is to exploit the passion of the man in the street for having a gamble. As far back as the days of Queen Anne, when the South Sea Bubble floated by John Law first taught the people of Britain that a piece of scrip is not necessarily worth its face value, the company promoter has always been in evidence. But it was not until the middle 'nineties, when the persuasive Hooley arrived on the scene, that the little investor really got interested in stocks and shares.

Hooley was smart. He split his wares, or shares, into small denominations, so that the small fry could buy. Later on came an even slicker brigade; you could buy their offerings at a shilling a time, mostly what they called "deferred" shares. It could be described as a case of that dividend deferred which maketh the shareholder sick. The bucket-shop keeper, whose days also go back to the naughty 'nineties, has done well over the craze for studying the financial columns which possesses John Citizen to-day.

Where Hooley outshone all his rivals, before or since, was in his talent for popularizing himself. He took up his headquarters in the great metropolis at the Midland Hotel, St. Pancras, engaged the whole of the first floor, and at once proceeded to let it be known that Midas himself now existed in reality. Following the Dunlop Company, a spectacular success, came Schweppes' Mineral Waters, Bovril, Humber Cycles, and a swarm of lesser companies linked up with the fast-booming bicycle trade.

He was said to have invented "guinea-pigs", these being represented by noble lords who decorated the directorates of his numerous companies in return for cash payments of £25,000 and so much per annum fees. He gave sumptuous luncheons free to all and sundry; he obtained a vast adver-

tisement by presenting the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral with a set of gold communion plate which cost him £10,000. Of course, he had to have a yacht; this is a fate no newly-made millionaire can avert.

The time came, and very soon, when Mr. Hooley found his way into royal circles. The then Prince of Wales was anxious to acquire a small property owned by the Nottingham nabob which marched with Sandringham in Norfolk. Hooley was invited to meet the Prince, with every hope of becoming a member of the small but select circle comprising the Rothschilds, Sir Ernest Cassel, Sir John Blundell Maple and other millionaires.

However, they seem to have regarded the new arrival as something akin to a cuckoo in the royal nest. One particular week-end, according to what Hooley told me in his lively way, the Prince noticed that he was not getting on too well with the other guests. On the Saturday morning, as the party were about to drive off to the Sandringham Stud—Hooley was thinking of buying a few blue-blooded yearlings—His Royal Highness took him by the arm and led him over to Lord Rothschild.

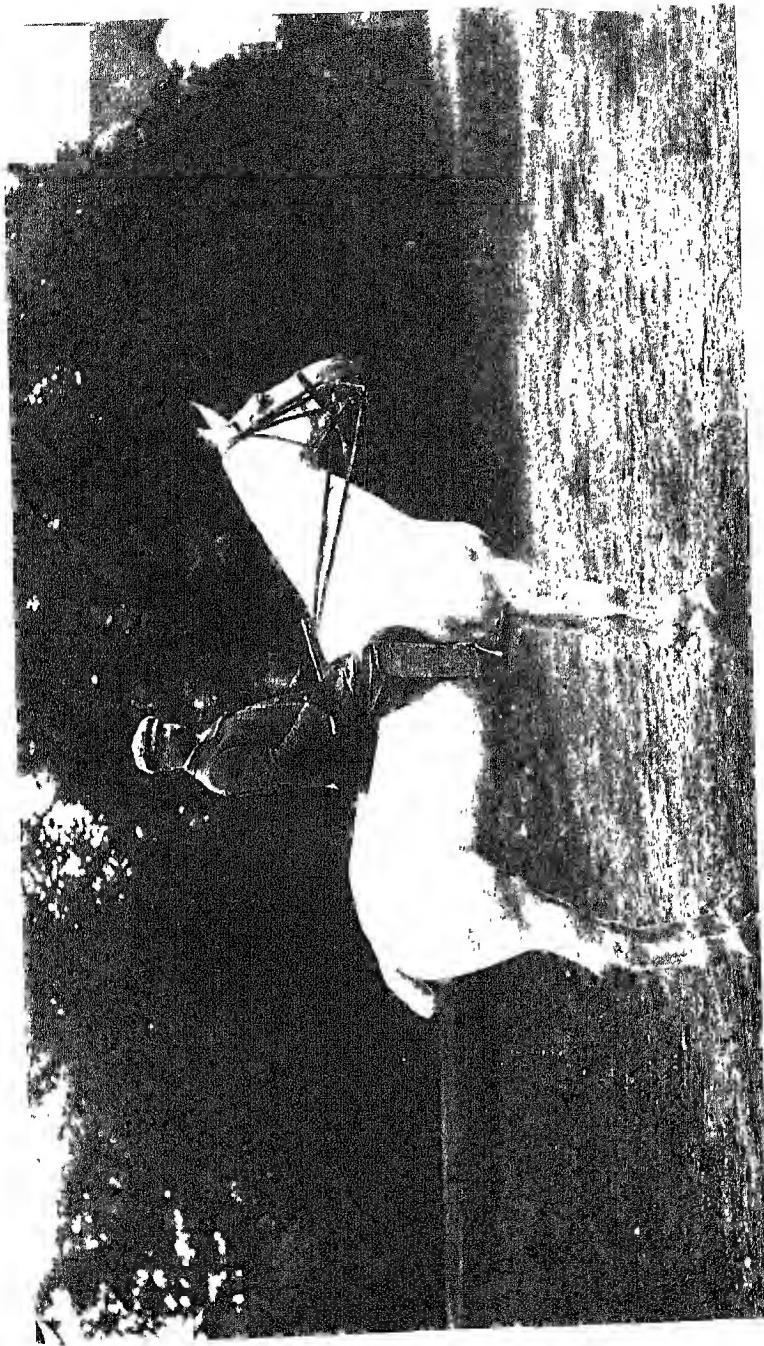
"Natty," he said, "I want you to shake hands with my very particular friend Hooley."

And he stayed there to see that "Natty" did so!

Certainly the Rothschilds had cause to be a trifle perturbed at this new Croesus who was carrying all before him. He purchased Papworth Hall in Cambridgeshire, and spent £250,000 making it one of the finest estates in the country. He became High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire and did so, on his own confession to me, by inducing the gentleman who had a lien on this exalted job to stand aside for an attractive monetary consideration.

Of course, he had to go into Parliament, this being another punishment meted out to all men of millions. He was to have a baronetcy in the next Honours list and was also to be elected a member of the Carlton Club. In return for all this gilded glory, he would part with £100,000.

Beautiful ladies dazzled him by condescending to borrow large sums of money, one to the tune of £35,000. Alms-houses were endowed by him. These he took me to see, close to Risley. He bought the livings of a few parishes



Ernest Terah Hooley



Gustav Steinhauer
The Kaiser's Master Spy

round about his birthplace, just to show he was not unmindful of the higher life.

In his younger days, he had played the organ in the Baptist Church at Long Eaton, in Derbyshire. He still kept in practice; when I was at Risley Hall, he used to play me a few hymns, just to prove that early memories remained strong.

In the midst of all this hectic existence, Hooley suddenly exploded a bomb. He filed his own petition in bankruptcy and to no mean amount. There was a deficit of £1,500,000.

Where had all *his* money gone? Unlike some of his successors in after years, he *had* made money. Most of Hooley's earnings, of course, had gone in reckless expenditure; he had also paid away enormous sums to the people who had financed him. Anyhow, the sycophantic folk who had hitherto fawned upon him now gave him the cold shoulder and they were even less friendly when eventually he had to appear in the London Bankruptcy Court to explain his losses.

Stories of vast sums paid to people for all manner of dubious benefits had to be explained away; it was either that, or being committed for contempt of court. The gold communion service went back for the benefit of his creditors; he now knew hardly a soul who would call him friend. The lawyers were the only ones who called his name blessed. They still do so.

In a couple of years' time he was off again with a new batch of companies to titivate the public palate. Young Alfred Harmsworth, otherwise Northcliffe in the bud, had just created a stir with the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company. He meant to grow all his own paper, a sound idea which proved to be one of the corner-stones of his subsequent great fortune. People fairly scrambled to acquire shareholdings in this ambitious venture and when Hooley resumed operations, he thought of the old saying about imitation being the sincerest form of flattery. Out came a company called Newfoundland Pulp and Timber Territories. Its shares were on tap for anybody desiring a gamble, which it undoubtedly represented.

About that period, Hooley acquired a smart young clerk; his name was James White.

And so the Squire of Risley carried on for quite a long time. He became a daring speculator in land, buying big

estates for cutting-up purposes. Always there stuck at the back of his head the idea that he might repeat that famous *coup* he had pulled off at Manchester, when he snatched the Trafford Park estate from under the nose of the Corporation and eventually sold the property to them for £650,000. It was part of the land required for the Manchester Ship Canal.

About 1905 he found a partner with many similar ideas—Horatio Bottomley, to wit. Together they unearthed numerous profitable clients, though one must say that Hooley invariably shrank from the reckless share-pushing that Bottomley was so fond of. But as a team of two, one working outside to find the clients, while the other attended to extracting the money, they made a unique combination. Frequent indeed were their appearances in the Chancery Courts; the legal profession fairly reverenced these two silver-tongued share salesmen who always had a fortune in waiting.

However, the day arrived when they fell out and went their respective ways. According to Hooley, Bottomley diddled him right and left, making him responsible for huge sums utterly outside his knowledge. There were also a few law-suits involving the M.P. for South Hackney of so unsavoury a nature—the plundering of foolish old men and impressionable boys—that the Risley Rajah cut adrift. He went back to the land and gave stocks and shares the go-by for a few years.

I found Hooley had a brain that moved about three jumps ahead of you. I arrived at Risley Hall and was greeted by this man who had had about £100,000,000 through his hands in thirty years with the most disarming frankness. He wanted no halos around his head, no whitewash for the mistakes of the past.

The first thing that impressed me about the gentleman was the sight of a dozen light grey bowler hats hanging up in the hall; these, he explained, were ordered wholesale from a firm in Piccadilly from his own block, every five years.

"I used to buy my suits the same way," he added. "I gave my tailor in Savile Row a cheque for £1,000 to supply me with forty hand-made suits. I tried one on; the rest had to follow them for fitting."

His appearance had changed considerably from the days when he was dabbling in the millions. Then he had worn a beard. Many people, he admitted, swore that he had Jewish blood in him. This he denied, and to prove his words, took me along to see his 90-year-old father living hard-by, a hale and hearty old gentleman who still seemed surprised at the exploits of his remarkable son.

Yes, you could call Ernest Terah Hooley all that and more. He seemed to me easily the most persuasive salesman I had ever known. He cared nothing for sport; about his only hobby in life was breeding pigs. Pictures made no great appeal to him, though plenty of them were to be seen at Risley Hall. I found him an ardent shopper; occasionally we took a day off from our work to visit a place like Lincoln, rarely returning without a few cheeses and hams. He bought his coal fifty tons at a time; he even had in his house a hundred-gallon cask of whisky.

I asked him how much money he had made in the course of his life.

"Perhaps twenty millions altogether," he said. "During the good old days, I made £7,000,000 profit in two years."

He was a wonderful raconteur and his memory was astounding, I went to an estate he had been offered; there were two thousand acres of land which he meant to sell to speculative builders and a magnificent Elizabethan red-brick mansion.

"You can have the house for £1,500," he remarked, with all the figures already decided in his mobile brain.

All this would provoke from a Hollywood film producer the exclamation: "Gee, what a story!" However, we don't do these pictures in England. Mr. Hooley's "Confessions" were published in the *News of the World* with immense success, not to mention an immense amount of hard work on the part of your humble servant. Financially Mr. Hooley held the thick end of the stick; he received more than ten times the amount I did. With subsequent efforts of mine which were on the big scale I attempted to redress this uncalled-for discrepancy, not without success.

I might add, by way of a postscript and guidance for other journalists, that half the battle is selling the goods.

It is also an excellent idea to change your offerings now

and again. This applies to books just as much as newspapers, so I am now going to tell about a few outstanding crime stories that came my way.

CHAPTER VII

MURDER MOST FAMOUS

MURDERERS come, murderers go, but the fame of Dr. Crippen endureth for ever. Methinks the little American quack should have a statue erected to his memory by the scribes of Fleet Street, along with that of the late lamented Mr. Charles Peace. They've provided the Sunday joint for many a hard-working ink-slinger.

Now, murderers are hard to classify in point of merit. They must have sex appeal to be really good; here was where Crippen scored. They must also take place on the Londoner's doorstep; there's a thrill to be got out of passing through a street where homicide has taken place. Thirdly, there must be a long-drawn-out trial at the Old Bailey, with people fighting for admission. And lastly, the great B.P. like nothing better than a woman on trial for her life.

Having thus, with a slight apology for this brief analysis, made it plain what constitutes high-class murder melodrama, I will say straight out what I consider the greatest "draw" I have known in all my experience—Crippen excepted. It was the Ilford tragedy, which occurred in 1922 and resulted in a foolish boy and a married woman dying on the scaffold.

I don't suppose that Frederick Wensley, who took charge of the investigations, as he usually did during his time at the Yard, would consider it one of his greatest exploits. But it was certainly a case throbbing with human interest right up to the last, when the woman met her end in Holloway Gaol, leaving behind her a storm of discussion as to whether she deserved the extreme penalty. I happened to have a nodding acquaintance with Dr. John Morton, the Governor of Holloway. He was a kind-

hearted Irishman and I think, if he had had his way, the woman would have been reprieved.

On October 4, 1922, the London newspapers—those that specialized in late news—came out with a story of an unpretentious clerk who had been savagely attacked in a dark street in the east-side suburb of Ilford. He had not died instantly; his wife, who was accompanying him, had dragged him to their home only a hundred yards away and there, shortly afterwards, he had expired. According to the wife, neither she nor her husband knew the murderer; it was just someone who had sprung out of the dark.

Such things rarely happen in London; we don't go in for assassination reminiscent of the Italian banditti. Something more was behind all this, something which induced Wensley to come down post-haste from "Central" to drag the truth out of the mouth of the one who would surely know. Edith Thompson was her name, the spouse of a City clerk who had been through the Great War and then settled down to the humdrum life of a suburban husband.

Wensley arrived, heard all there was to hear, and speedily decided that the person who could solve the riddle was the wife. She had already been taken to Ilford police station; but, for a time at least, the formidable Wensley made no impression on her. Calmly she told him the sequence of events.

"We were coming along Belgrave Road," she sobbed, "when all of a sudden someone sprang out on us and stabbed poor Percy. He gave a cry and fell on my shoulders; then I discovered that blood was pouring over me. I managed to drag him home, but he died within a few minutes. Oh, oh, oh, what shall I do?"

"There is one thing you can do," replied Wensley, "and that is to tell us the truth. Who was it that stabbed your husband?"

She was a consummate actress, this Edith Thompson. Despairingly, wiping the tears from her eyes, she declared that she could not say. It was some mysterious assailant, and she could give no clue to his identity.

But within an hour or so an alarmingly different theory presented itself. The murdered man's brother, who had been called out by the police in the middle of the night, returned to the police station to inform Wensley that if he laid hands

on a young man named Frederick Bywaters, he would probably find the murderer.

The brother was confronted with his sister-in-law. She received him as calmly as though he were paying an everyday visit.

"Bywaters?" she said in apparent amazement. "How do I know where he is?"

"You saw him last night."

"I did nothing of the kind. I have not seen him for some time."

Recrimination could effect no useful purpose just then. Wensley terminated the interview and continued his search. As he said, other means would have to be found.

Never was a crime so packed with swift-moving thrills as this Ilford murder. Dr. Crippen's historic crime and escape, his capture aboard the S.S. *Montrose*, and his subsequent sensational trial at the Old Bailey is the only case that can compare with this macabre drama in the prosaic suburb of Ilford.

It fell to my lot to interview many of the people associated with it, and I still recollect what one of them told me about a remark that was passed by one of Percy Thompson's relatives at the time of his wedding in 1916—a remark that was prophetic to an astounding degree.

Incidentally, it may also have been largely responsible for that unhappy life which eventually brought three people to their deaths.

When Percy Thompson married his wife, one of his relatives, tactlessly enough, said to him: "I would sooner this were your funeral. You will regret marrying this girl as long as you live."

True enough, perhaps; but not exactly a happy send-off on a wedding day.

What was it Kipling wrote about a "rag and a bone and a hank of hair"? The phrase came back to my mind when I heard that Percy Thompson and his wife had on the night of the tragedy been to the Criterion to see that famous farce, "A Little Bit of Fluff".

There's irony, if you like! A little bit of fluff—the slang

equivalent of Kipling's rag and a bone and a hank of hair. A dangerous little bit of fluff, without a doubt—a pleasure-loving, scheming woman, condemned by Fate to be tied to a man she despised, racking her brain day and night to find a way out.

The Thompson family disliked her. They said she was not the right type for Percy. What wonder, then, that the wife retorted in kind and vented on her husband all the spleen of her restless, dissatisfied nature. She took to absenting herself of an evening—innocently enough as far as the unsuspecting husband was concerned.

When hostile acquaintances of the lady warned her spouse that he was being grossly deceived he uncompromisingly declined to believe them—even when the serpent in the Garden of Eden revealed itself in the person of young Frederick Bywaters, ten years his wife's junior. She had known him since her girlhood days, so what harm could there be in such friendship?

So all the time this was going on there was boiling up a *crime passionel* which only wanted the extra fuel to be found in the jealousy of a foolish boy inflamed by a vindictive woman.

One might have understood Bywaters's infatuation had Edith Thompson been at all good-looking. She was far from it. The likeliest solution of the boy's silly passion was that he found callow delight in playing around with a married woman, who fascinated and fooled him to her heart's delight. She insisted on his accompanying them on their annual holiday in the Isle of Wight; he was a welcome visitor at the little house they occupied in Kensington Gardens, Ilford.

For eighteen months this intrigue gradually developed, and there is evidence, towards the end of this period, that Edith Thompson was attempting to poison her husband. She said so in the letters she wrote to Bywaters, making mention of powdered glass and arsenic secretly administered in his food.

In itself this would not have been conclusive—she was such an incorrigible liar that she might merely have been egging the boy on, but there is further testimony of her diabolical efforts to kill the unfortunate man whom she had sworn to love, honour and obey.

Towards the end of 1921 Percy Thompson had become a

shadow of his former robust self. Instead of being a well-set-up and extremely healthy man, he became thin and nervous, highly irritable, and a continual sufferer from pains which he was unable to explain.

So when his wife told Bywaters that she had been giving him powdered glass in his food she may, for once in her life, have been telling the truth and not one of her usual fairy tales. Against this, it is only fair to remark that when a post-mortem was held on Thompson's body, no trace of any poison could be discovered.

It may have been, of course, that she had ceased her attempt to kill him herself, and was then more industriously engaged in inducing Bywaters to accomplish her end. Or it may have been, as has been suggested, that she was merely dramatizing her unhappy marriage.

What was the truth? Well may the historian pause at the appalling picture of this little suburban siren, working by day at the wholesale millinery establishment in the City where she earned quite a comfortable income, and then going home at night, planning and plotting the death of her unsuspecting husband. Can this be true? he is forced to ask himself. If so, she was a tigress rather than a woman.

Certainly Edith Thompson might never have been convicted of murder or hanged had it not been for evidence that she had deliberately lured her husband to his death. I think I am right in saying that I am one of the few people in the world who know the real reason for the extreme penalty which was exacted in her case.

It is true that the letters she had written to Bywaters, which were seized on the P. & O. steamship *Morea*—he had been employed as a steward—were in themselves a gross incitement to murder. The fire and passion they breathed was interspersed with continual requests to put an end to what she was pleased to consider an intolerable state of affairs. How she expected Bywaters to commit murder and escape the consequences of his deed I do not know.

But by far the most important evidence which contributed to hang her was the fact that she had lured her husband away from their usual route home—which lay along the brightly-lit Cranbrook Road out of Ilford station—to another and much darker thoroughfare which ran parallel to it.

This was Belgrave Road. To reach the scene of the tragedy she must have taken her husband through York Road, which runs between the other two, and then along Belgrave Road, where Bywaters, hidden by the darkness, was lying in wait.

Had they been a couple of lovers reluctant to go indoors the walk round Belgrave Road would have been understandable. But it was then past midnight, and Percy Thompson and his wife had long got past the loving stage.

One needed no Sherlock Holmes' intuition to appreciate the reason that had prompted the woman to take the round-about route. She, and she alone, knew that Bywaters, armed with a formidable knife, was waiting to assassinate her husband. Heaven only knows how she expected to dodge retribution!

She gave one account of the tragedy when she staggered into her home in Kensington Gardens with her wounded husband; another, an altogether different one, when she realized that the onus of guilt rested on two persons.

Bywaters himself, when taxed with the confession she had made, also attempted to save himself by saying that he had followed the couple home from Ilford station, caught up with them in Belgrave Road, and had then picked a quarrel with Thompson, which resulted in his whipping out a knife and stabbing the unfortunate man—but with no thought of murder in his heart.

One can feel rather sorry for Bywaters, certainly not for the woman. But he was telling a lie when he said that he had followed them. He had already arranged with Edith Thompson to be waiting in Belgrave Road to settle the matter, as he said, once and for all!

Think of this tragedy, you people who sleep in your little homes at night! Just try to realize this Judas-like woman sitting in the Criterion Theatre laughing at "A Little Bit of Fluff", knowing all the time what was about to take place.

What sort of nature must she have possessed to be able to sit in that theatre with murder in her heart? She had cooked the breakfast in the morning and had worked at her millinery during the day. Did she really anticipate that Bywaters would kill her husband, or did she merely think

that there would be a quarrel of some sort which might bring their married life to an end?

It is hard to say. There are times when I find it difficult to believe that she thought murder would actually occur, and that the time might come when she would find herself in the dock. The letters she wrote to Bywaters *might* not have hanged her; taken in conjunction with the fact that she had led her husband to the spot where death awaited him, they made it practically certain that the supreme penalty would be exacted.

Nor was she helped by the lies she told the police in the first place. Had she divulged Bywaters's identity as soon as she reached home, or even at Ilford police station, she might have escaped the gallows.

Stubbornly maintaining her protestations of innocence, she remained in obstinate mood for some hours after her arrest. Then it dawned upon her, on the suggestion of one of the murdered man's relatives, that it would be just as well if she told the truth.

So far, the police had been unable to find Bywaters. He could not be found at his mother's house in Upper Norwood. Here, again, the police were greatly assisted by the Thompson family, who had an idea that the wanted youth—he was nothing more than a boy—might turn up at a place in Manor Park.

A cool hand was this Bywaters. The police did arrest him at the house suggested, and to give an idea how self-possessed he was, it should be recorded that he walked into the place—before the police arrived—with a copy of an evening paper in his hand and remarked: "This is a shocking thing. Percy Thompson dead! Who could have killed him?"

The answer to the riddle was forthcoming with dramatic suddenness. In the midst of his remarks there was a knock at the door. In walked three police officers.

"Frederick Bywaters?" asked the senior detective.

"Yes," said Bywaters, his face momentarily blanching. "What do you want?"

"You are wanted on a charge of wilful murder. A man named Percy Thompson was killed last night, and you are suspected of being the person responsible."

Picture the amazement of the people to whom Bywaters had been talking! Coolly enough, young Bywaters tried to bluff it out. "Are you mad?" he demanded. "What do I know about any murder?" He was quickly handcuffed and taken away by cab to Ilford police station, a prey to feelings which must have been terrible.

He did not know that Edith Thompson had been arrested, nor of the confession which was his death warrant. Wensley was waiting for him.

"Now, then," began the detective, "I want you to tell me what you were doing last night."

Bywaters began the story he had no doubt been concocting since he had fled from the scene of the murder the night before. Wensley heard him out in silence, his keen eyes never leaving Bywaters's face.

"Yes," he said at last, "but your story does not tally with the facts in my possession. I have received an altogether different account of your movements."

Bywaters began to ride the high horse, until Wensley told him that he wasn't investigating the murder for any personal satisfaction.

"I don't know whether you are aware of the fact," he explained to the boy, "that I am down here to deal with a very foul crime. It will be just as well for you to tell me the truth."

Sullenly Bywaters retorted that he had done so, but he changed colour and his defiant demeanour also altered when Wensley informed him that it would be just as well for him to know that Edith Thompson had been arrested and had made a confession naming him as the murderer.

"She has confessed?" asked the boy.

"That is so," replied Wensley.

Bywaters thought hard. In that moment, with the sands of his young life fast running out, one might have felt some little pity for him. Then the waiting police officers took down the halting story he told of his association with Edith Thompson, the events that led up to the crime, and the fatal meeting in Belgrave Road.

He was taken away to the cells, and then the police went down to Tilbury Docks. In his sleeping quarters on board the S.S. *Morea* they found the compromising letters written

to him by Edith Thompson, which effectually cleared up any doubts as to who had instigated the crime.

From the time of her confession Edith Thompson was numb with fear. When she and her accomplice were tried at the Old Bailey before Mr. Justice Shearman, the question arose of putting her into the witness box. Sir Henry Curtis-Bennett wisely enough decided that if she were to have any hope at all, it could only come from pity for her as a woman. Nothing was to be gained by putting her into the box.

Bywaters's fate was a foregone conclusion; his counsel, Mr. Cecil Whiteley, fought with all his famous skill to obtain a verdict of manslaughter, but all in vain. The guilty couple, in a crowded court with many people on the verge of tears, were found guilty and condemned to death. It was a scene that will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

Rumours were flying around London that a jury of matrons would be empanelled to decide whether Mrs. Thompson's execution should be postponed, in which case, of course, it would never have taken place. But finally the drama resolved itself into whether or not a woman should be hanged.

Questions of this sort receive the most careful consideration at the hands of the Home Secretary. One can imagine how anxiously Mr. Bridgeman approached the distasteful business. He decided that he could not advise a reprieve in either case, and after the customary period of waiting the executions took place.

The woman's last days must have been terrible. She had completely collapsed, and when Ellis, the executioner, came to do his work he found the task so horrible that he vowed he would never undertake another hanging. Nor did he ever do so. He resigned forthwith, and spent the rest of his life a prey to the horrors of that fearful morning in Holloway Gaol when Edith Thompson went to her Maker. A few years ago, as will probably be remembered, he took his own life.

Four deaths, all for that rag and a bone and a hank of hair! Looking back dispassionately on the life of this wayward woman, it is hard to believe, even now, that she really contemplated murder. When you think of her cooking the

morning breakfast, hurrying off to town, rushing back at night to prepare the evening meal, it seems incredible that she should have had murder in her breast.

This exaction of the death penalty from Edith Thompson provided a vivid, and somewhat invidious, contrast to the murder case that had greatly intrigued the public the year before. I am referring to the crime of Ronald True.

I happened to know a great deal about this sordid affair and, for what it is worth, I might mention that I gave the *Evening News* a first-class scoop about it. True was nothing more than a *souteneur*, living on the earnings of a prostitute named Gertrude Yates; she lived in a basement flat in Fimborough Road, Fulham, from which she sallied forth of an evening to ply her profession in Piccadilly.

One dark and dreary morning in November 1921, the old woman who attended to her wants arrived to find Gertrude Yates dead. She had been killed in a horribly brutal manner; first her head was battered in with a rolling-pin taken from the kitchen, followed by strangulation with the cord of her dressing-gown. The alarm was raised forthwith and the C.I.D. men from "Central", headed by the massive Superintendent "Dick" Hawkins, set about tracing the criminal. They soon ascertained that the "fancy boy" was one Ronald True, who had frequently stayed at the flat.

Hawkins worked fast; despite his size, he was thunder and lightning once a serious crime had to be tackled. That very same evening, with two of his subordinates and someone who knew the murderer, he went to a Hammersmith music hall, where True was blissfully enjoying himself.

Mentally, there appeared nothing wrong with him. He took the matter with complete sang-froid and said to Hawkins: "Well, I suppose it's no use saying anything now. Time enough for that after I've seen my lawyer."

This was remarkably sane for a man on whose behalf insanity was to be pleaded. The police found some of the dead woman's jewellery in his possession.

Then a curious story came from True. It seemed that he had aristocratic relations or connections, and although they wanted to have nothing to do with this unsavoury ne'er-do-well, the money was found to have him well defended. His case was in the hands of Mr. Freke Palmer, the late Maryle-

bone solicitor, who possessed a formidable reputation in matters of this sort.

The main hope of the defence lay in a plea of insanity, but despite the strong evidence to this effect called by True's counsel, the late Sir Henry Curtis-Bennett, it did not succeed. Mr. Justice McCardie sentenced the prisoner to death and very few people expected that he would not hang.

However, to the utter amazement of everybody, an enquiry was authorised by the Home Office to make further investigation into True's sanity. Numerous people were interrogated as to his previous history, while the medical officer of Brixton Prison, Dr. Grierson, also supported the contention of the defence that the condemned man was not responsible for his actions. No doubt the evidence must have been pretty strong, even if the subsequent reprieve did arouse a storm of indignation, which took the form of questions to the Home Secretary in the House of Commons. When, in 1922, it became known that Edith Thompson would be hanged, the outcry came afresh. However, Ronald True had escaped the gallows, though from all accounts, plentifully published at the time of the Thompson-Bywaters trial, his life in Broadmoor went along normally enough.

Then came another reprieve which aroused violent criticism—the case of the young Scotsman, James Mason, who killed a taxi-cab driver in Brixton with cold-blooded intent. What saved this man's life was the fact that the Senior Treasury Counsel who conducted the prosecution, Sir Richard Muir, did not inspect the scene of the crime, as he usually did. He certainly drove out there; but a heavy storm was raging and he did not bother to get out of the cab.

Mason was found guilty, but reprieved. Muir said afterwards how fortunate this man was, for if he had left the cab and gone over the ground properly, he would have known, and demonstrated to the jury, that Mason's alibi was completely false. He had been reprieved owing to some slight doubt about his guilt.

It is nonsense to say you can't "get away" with murder. I have known many such cases, and what is more significant, been told of them by the lawyers who conducted the defence. One such instance, and a glaring miscarriage of justice, concerned the killing of an old woman at Cambridge by a tramp

who specialized in robbing the tills of small, lonely shops. This man, who has died since, escaped owing to the stupidity of a policeman who spilt a bottle of ink over some finger-prints that were vital to the prosecution. He had already committed a similar murder and gone scot-free by succeeding in accounting for five crucial minutes of his time, when the police knew full well that he was the only person who could have committed the crime.

How many poisoning cases have gone undetected? I knew of one in Croydon, involving the death of four people, which has never been solved. I lunched on one notable occasion with Sir William Willcox, the famous pathologist, who conducted the autopsies for the Home Office in all these crimes. It was when I was writing the Memoirs of the late Sir Richard Muir, and although Sir William was discretion itself in all he would say, I could gather that many poisoners escaped justice.

To detect poison was not the trouble; the difficulty lay in discovering how it had got into the body of the dead person. Not all poisoners are so accommodating as the fly-paper "fiend", Frederick Seddon, who left nothing but clues behind.

Women on trial for their lives are a heartrending sight. I am not thinking of female monsters like Mrs. Dyer, the baby farmer, nor of more recent cases like that of the poisoner, Nurse Waddington. It is when my mind goes back to another tragedy I knew very well, that of Madame Fahmy, that my imagination revolts. This unfortunate French-woman shot her Egyptian husband at the Savoy Hotel in disgustingly provocative circumstances that could not be published in the Press. The so-called "Prince" Fahmy was nothing more than an out-and-out degenerate and by the time Marshall-Hall had finished his dramatically-conducted defence, with the fatal pistol in court to give full play to the theatrical atmosphere he so cleverly introduced into the case, there was no doubt about Madame Fahmy being acquitted. This drama also drew a wonderful "gate". Not a few of the society ladies of London were there.

The worst spectacle of all to be witnessed used to be that of poor little servant girls being charged with the murder

of their babies. If found guilty, they had to be sentenced to death, to comply with the law. What dreadful scenes took place in the courts as those unfortunate creatures heard the judge pronounce the dread words "To be hanged by the neck till you are dead".

How many of them I saw drop in a dead faint, after an agonized shriek that turned your blood cold? It was Sir Richard Muir, I think, who finally induced the Home Office to put some check on those appalling scenes. Dr. John Morton, the Governor of Holloway Prison right up to the time of his early death, once told me that if he could have had his way, these wretched, betrayed girls would never go on their trial.

CHAPTER VIII

MEN, PENS AND HORSES

VAST changes were taking place in the Street of Adventure at this period. Lord Northcliffe died in 1922 in the prime of his life—he was only fifty-seven—and with him there passed a great Englishman, one of the outstanding figures of his time.

For nearly thirty years he had been a powerful influence in the affairs of the nation, and it will always be my opinion that if he and Mr. Lloyd George had not been involved in that unnecessary quarrel, they might well have gone on to keep the peace of the turbulent world that soon began to arise out of the Treaty of Versailles and, if it comes to that, the Treaty of Trianon as well.

Northcliffe, of course, never pretended to be a politician. I don't know that he ever made a speech in the House of Lords, or even attended the deliberations of that august assembly. He certainly had no ambition to become what is called a House of Commons man, because he was too impatient of trivialities and had no time for the policy of give-and-take which is the hall-mark of the successful statesman.

But he had unerring vision and boundless energy. What he wanted was a man like Lloyd George to collaborate with him in the making of the new world that was clearly necessary after the Great War. Bolshevik Russia constituted an urgent

problem, as did a disrupted Germany, a bankrupt Austria-Hungary and an impoverished Italy. Ambitious, imperialistic Japan, dissatisfied with the award to her under the Versailles share-out, was another potential danger, as were the Balkans. Someone, probably old Queen Marie, did a pretty little piece of lobbying when the Rumanians, who had not exactly distinguished themselves as our allies, were given huge tracts of territory at the expense of other nations. They got Bessarabia and the Bukovina from Russia, Transylvania from Hungary, and the Dobrudja from Bulgaria.

For most of this idiotic carving-up one could blame the French. The Poles, the Czechs, the Estonians, the Latvians, the Lithuanians and the Finns all got their independence, irrespective of their means and ability to defend it.

However, Northcliffe died. His newspapers passed into the control of his brother Harold, Lord Rothermere; the big periodical publishing house in Farringdon Street, the Amalgamated Press, was sold to the Berry group. Politics ceased to interest the Press Lords; it was the beginning of Big Business in Fleet Street.

Sir Edward Hulton, the Manchester millionaire who controlled many publications in the North, found himself an exceedingly sick man and disposed of all his holdings to Lord Rothermere and Lord Beaverbrook for £4,000,000, congratulating himself at the time that he had made a good deal.

He lived to see that he had not fully exploited the value of his business. Rothermere and Beaverbrook took the *Evening Standard* out of the group and passed the properties on to the Berry Brothers, who, in their turn, eventually floated an £8,000,000 company—Allied Newspapers, which to-day, with a big chain of provincial newspapers, is now a £12,000,000 concern, with ramifications all over the British Isles.

Rothermere himself also took a hand in the buying of the "provincials". There were fabulous offers being made for all manner of newspaper businesses, some of which were, foolishly as it has since turned out, refused. I know of one firm in the North who were offered £2,000,000 for their properties. They refused, on principle, though to-day I have no doubt they would jump at half the price.

Another formidable rival in this fertile field then made his

appearance—Mr. Julius Salter Elias, the managing director of Odhams Press. He had acquired a 99-year lease of the *People* from the executors of the late Sir William Madge and without any loss of time, in March 1925 to be exact, he began waking up the nabobs of the Sunday newspaper world. His first outstanding move, apart from the literary features with which I had something to do, was the offer of free death and accident insurance to the readers of the *People*, a fine circulation-getter hitherto confined to the popular daily Press and certain periodicals.

Northcliffe, I believe, originated this form of insurance with *Answers*, which started him on the road to fame, with this clever slogan:

WHEN YOU TRAVEL BY TRAIN
STICK TO ANSWERS, MIGHT AND MAIN.

Simple, yet marvellously effective. Then we had fabulous football competitions, which started with £1,000 prizes, and then reached the dizzy heights of £20,000 being offered. People would buy hundreds of papers in the hope of winning a small fortune; if they had known anything about the mathematical odds against them, they might have discovered that it was about three million to one that they would not pick all the winners. Anyhow, the waste-paper merchants did a roaring trade and circulations went up with a terrific bound.

Then came the crossword puzzle, which is still with us, not so popular, perhaps, as of yore, but still emulating Johnny Walker—going strong. The publishers of dictionaries suddenly found their wares in great demand; every suburban train was crowded with frowning crossword puzzle enthusiasts. The craze became so widespread that the Home Office instituted a prosecution against some of the big newspaper firms. The Gaming Act was being infringed, said Authority. The Chief Magistrate at Bow Street convicted one of the offenders, who promptly took the matter to a Divisional Court, where the Lord Chief Justice of England solemnly delivered judgment, following the eloquent case for the defence put forward by the handsome Sir William Jowitt, that crossword puzzles really required skill, and were

not to be won without a certain amount of brain-fag. And so we go on!

A new generation of journalists had arrived in Fleet Street. The *Sunday Express*, which Lord Beaverbrook had established after the war, was gradually getting on its feet under the energetic Editorship of John Gordon, a hard-headed Scot who had been on the *Evening News* in my time, ably helped by that picturesque peer, Viscount Castlerosse—Valentine to his intimates. Down in Tudor Street, the old *Referee* passed into the possession of the theatrical magnate, Sir Oswald Stoll, who was quickly to discover that without "Dagonet" and the other lights of the paper, the *Referee* would soon have to take the count.

He afterwards handed this buff sheet on to Isidore Ostrer, of Gaumont-British fame, who only succeeded in confirming what was obvious, that the day of the *Referee* had already gone. What these two gentlemen parted with before they walked out of Fleet Street can only be guessed at; it was, at any rate, quite a respectable fortune.

Much of the old Fleet Street was then vanishing; one could hardly visualize journalists of the George R. Sims type existing in the bustling world that so quickly grew up. Most of the old-timers began to disappear from Carmelite House—Tom Marlowe; Sir Andrew Caird, who used to tell us that his business consisted of counting the pennies; Walter Fish, the news Editor of the *Daily Mail*; Jaines Heddle, who had been Hulton's right-hand man; W. J. Evans of the *Evening News*; and many more.

Yes, Big Business had taken up its residence in that street which lies 'twixt City and Society, judiciously balancing the scales between both these warring elements. Even the old haunts of the Fourth Estate underwent a change. I missed the policeman who used to be so friendly, especially the stalwart accustomed to station himself outside a certain hostelry in Tudor Street. On one auspicious occasion, when I was on the *Daily Mail* and had just hopped out for a late supper, I asked him if he would mind partaking of a drink.

He gave an appreciative wriggle and expressed a desire for a pint of ale. I brought it out to him—he dare not go inside—and gazed admiringly at the way he poured it down. He didn't drink it; he just opened his mouth and let the beer

flow below. This fascinated me to such an extent that I asked him to have another, and then another, until finally eight pints had passed into oblivion.

"Well, good night, sir," he said at last, "mustn't drink too much to-night."

"Tell me," I asked, "how long have you been on the Force?"

"Eighteen years," quoth he.

"Ever pinched anybody in your life?"

"No, sir, and I ain't going to start now. Too much trouble getting up in the morning to attend Court." Aren't our police wonderful!

He goes into my Gallery of the Great.

It was a summer's afternoon, and a Sunday at that, when I drove up one of those narrow lanes which lead off Newmarket's High Street, looking for Fitzroy House, the residence of a man whose name was indeed a household word—Robert Standish Sievier.

Newmarket is a deceiving little town. You may drive or walk through its main thoroughfare and say to yourself: "This surely can't be the place where they keep all the race-horses!" Yet it is, and hidden away behind the sleepy street are all manner of highways and byways which conceal famous racing stables.

I had written to Mr. Sievier, long known to me by name and sight, suggesting that the publication of some reminiscences of his eventful life might interest the British public. Bob, like Barkis, was willin'. I must come up to Fitzroy House and discuss the matter.

I found myself greeted by a rather portly, shrewd-faced man in the early sixties; he fairly radiated personality and must in his early days have been a real good-looker. He was slightly bandy-legged, and he walked with that slight swing you always see in the first-class horseman.

His welcome also smacked of the Turf. "Well, old Hoss," he said breezily. "How are you? Come in and make yourself at home."

Fitzroy House—now tenanted by the famous Frank Butters—looked decidedly Victorian. Old Chelsea and Dresden china was plentifully strewn around, interspersed

with many relics of Mr. Sievier's racing triumphs. In the hall I saw a silver-mounted hoof of the immortal Sceptre; in the study a jockey's cap and two crossed whips over a big photograph of his Cesarewitch winner, Warlingham. It all looked very comfortable; you could say that Mr. Sievier was a man of good taste. He took me for a brief tour of the grounds and the stables, greatly surprising me by the roominess of the place. I also had the felicity of being introduced to his celebrated bull-terriers, especially Queenie, the apple of his eye. Queenie, I regret to say, came to a sticky end. She and the Jockey Club ranger were sworn enemies, owing to her undue fondness for worrying sheep grazing on the Heath. She eventually paid with her life for this heretical behaviour.

We discussed terms; Bob could have a free hand in what he wrote, subject, of course, to there being no unwarrantable attacks on people with whom he had been upsides in days gone by; there were quite a few of them, I discovered.

I am not going to recapitulate the autobiography of Robert Standish Sievier as he told it. Over the next fifteen years I saw a great deal of him, and heard more. He died in May 1940, when just on eighty years of age, and in passing, he probably murmured: "Well, I can't complain. I've had a pretty good innings."

He certainly had. It is not given to many men to go through life as he did, winning astounding sums of money on the Turf, owning some of the greatest racehorses of his time, marrying into the peerage, being on intimate terms with half the great ones of the land, owning his own paper, conducting his own law-suits in the Courts with marked ability, and being enormously popular with all and sundry. What he did undoubtedly possess to a marked degree was a superabundantly persuasive personality and a confidence in himself which must have made him a big figure in the commercial world, if he had cared for business.

But, as he confessed to me: "I wasn't made for an office stool. At the age of sixteen I got expelled from Sherborne for betting, and I've been backing horses ever since."

Sievier's entrance into this vale of tears was unconventional enough to satisfy any novelist in search of a sensational

opening; he was born in a hansom cab owing to the fact that his mother, as he expressed it, "was late going down to the post".

However, he survived this untoward occurrence and spent his boyhood days quietly enough until, as I say, his sporting proclivities put an end to his public school career. Before he was seventeen he enlisted in the Frontier Police being recruited in London by the Cape Government. He served in the Kaffir War of 1877-78, worked for a time as dispenser to a doctor, and then, at the ripe old age of twenty-one, returned to the land of his birth. He became an actor and in Dublin, among other places, he was on the boards with another budding Irving in the person of James Mackay, better known in the years to come as Jimmy Glover, conductor of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

But Bob still hankered for the sporting life. The lights of London and the racecourse were in his blood. He won £6,000 at one fell swoop over the renowned Isonomy and for a couple of years everything was *couleur de rose*. Then came disaster and a return to the stage.

It would take too long to narrate the innumerable adventures and vicissitudes this restless seeker after life underwent for the next ten years. On the spur of the moment, he took passage in an Orient liner to Australia, where he found a rich livelihood open to him as a bookmaker. He traded under his mother's maiden name of Sutton and was known by it all through his stay in the Antipodes. Out there, also, he found a bride, a girl he met at a church bazaar; as may be imagined, it proved an incongruous union. His wife divorced him before he finally went back to England.

Certainly the redoubtable Bob kept himself well in the limelight. A few episodes of his lurid career "down under" were hurled at him years afterwards in the King's Bench when he brought his famous libel action against Sir James Duke. There were all manner of astounding allegations, of card-sharping and a few other items which need not be mentioned here.

All through his life he continued to make enemies; never was there a man with so sharp a tongue, nor, if it comes to that, one more inclined to pursue a petty vendetta.

Personally I found him extremely vain, incapable of telling

a story against himself, and inordinately didactic in his opinions. I happened to be dining at Fitzroy House one night when Bob began uttering all manner of uncomplimentary remarks about Americans. This may have been due to the fact that an American woman, and a very beautiful one, was seated at the table; she may, for all I know, have failed to come up to her host's expectations. Bob's remarks took the form of imitating the lady's strong accent.

She said nothing until he had finished; then, very quietly, she inquired: "Say, Mr. Sievier, have you ever heard yourself eating soup?" That silenced Bob, and I didn't often see him afflicted that way.

In the early 'nineties he had become one of the bloods of London. All the rip-roaring boys of the town knew him as a daring gambler who would play all night, winning and losing thousands of pounds. Among the acquaintances he made during these hectic times was that spectacular spendthrift "Ducks", the Marquess of Ailesbury. In 1891 he married the Marquess's sister, Lady Mabel Brudenell-Bruce.

Many sensational wins came Sievier's way for several years following his marriage. With the clever Charles Morton—whose reminiscences I wrote in 1926—he won £53,000 in one week, out of which useful sum he bought for £10,000 a two-year-old named Toddington. He also blossomed forth as a country gentleman, with cricket weeks at his house, accompanied by a fame shared by no other sportsman in the land. Sport and Sievier were synonymous.

In 1900, at the very height of his glory, came that episode, and its many sequels, which caused his name to ring throughout the world—the purchase of the yearling filly by Persimmon out of Ornament which he subsequently named Sceptre. She had been bred by the Duke of Westminster and by all the canons of the game, she ought to prove a champion. Bob, in his own words, meant to have her.

He went about the matter with characteristic daring. Sceptre was brought into the sale ring looking every inch a queen. "How much?" asked the auctioneer.

"Five thousand guineas," retorted Bob. There was a blank silence at the audacious bid; nobody uttered a word until little wizened John Porter, the Master of Kingsclere, quietly added: "One hundred."

"Six thousand," was Sievier's answer.

"And another hundred," murmured Porter.

So they went on, Sievier bidding in thousands, Porter in hundreds. At 10,000 guineas, the highest price for a yearling ever known in the history of racing, Sceptre was the property of the man whom all the mighty ones of the Turf looked upon as a vulgar upstart. But he could certainly call himself a splendid judge of the thoroughbred. Altogether at this historic sale he spent 25,000 guineas and made not one bad bargain.

What Sceptre accomplished as a racehorse need not be repeated here; it is all written in the annals of the great game. She was beaten but once as a two-year-old, in the Champagne Stakes at Doncaster, when really unfit to run—a habit her owner persisted in with many of his horses when cash and credit were both short. It is as a three-year-old that Sceptre's name will ever be remembered, for she won four out of the five Classic races and might have won the Derby as well but for going slightly awry before the race.

Sensational, and utterly untrue, rumours flew around, following the race for the Blue Riband, that Sievier had won an enormous sum laying against his filly for the Derby. No one who ever knew the real man would ever credit such a story; he was too fond of personal triumph, quite apart from any motives of honesty, to connive at any pulling of his horses.

I asked him the question straight out while at Fitzroy House. His answer was: "I would have given my right hand to win the Derby."

But he ran poor Sceptre to death, glutton for work though this peerless creature was. Following the disaster at Epsom, he sent her over to Paris to take part in the Grand Prix, where she experienced the almost invariable rough passage that English horses used to receive. She then won the St. Leger with all manner of unpleasant rumours flying about over a trial in which she had been beaten by Horatio Bottomley's Cesarewitch horse, Wargrave.

Sievier was in low water in 1903. More from necessity than choice he ran the filly in the Lincoln Handicap, a race utterly unsuitable to an animal that required a long, striding

course. She finished unplaced and that very same week, during the Liverpool Grand National meeting, she passed into the possession of Sir William Bass, the millionaire brewer, for £25,000.

Her late owner could hardly complain. Four horses bought at auction for just on £23,000 realized for him altogether £79,000, which was a shining tribute to his judgment. Sceptre, it might be added, achieved no spectacular triumphs in the colours of Sir William Bass. Nor did she prove a great success when retired to the paddocks. She threw nothing remotely resembling herself in point of merit, though to be sure some of her grand-progeny turned out highly useful to Mr. William Waldorf Astor, the Anglo-American millionaire who began breeding and racing on a big scale about this time.

And much the same fate attended the stud career of that other world-beater that followed Sceptre so soon—the wonderful Pretty Polly. They stand alone, these two, as the greatest fillies of all time.

Bob's luck, which hitherto had clung to him with almost uncanny faith for twenty years, took a decided turn for the worse following the loss of Sceptre. He became involved in an unsavoury dispute with the Sir James Duke I have already mentioned in brief. Duke, the son of a former Lord Mayor of London, had 'at one time been an amateur rider. There were allegations about baccara which made it necessary for Sievier to bring an action for slander.

He found no friend in the judge who tried the case—the late Sir William Grantham, whose appointment to the Bench had always constituted an engrossing mystery to the legal profession. After a long-drawn-out trial remarkable for more mud-slinging than had been heard in the Law Courts for many a long year, the jury, as they had been pointedly advised by the judge, decided that the occasion of the slander was privileged, and that Sir James Duke must have the verdict.

For Sievier the consequences were infinitely more serious than meeting the huge bill of costs involved. The Stewards of the Jockey Club met and within a few days of the trial ending, sent him a letter to inform him that he was "warned-

off". In future, he could not own or train any more race-horses, go into any enclosure, or enjoy any of the considerable privileges that had once been his.

He was now, to all intents and purposes, a social outcast. And unjustly so, in my opinion. The waves of time have long since washed over this *cause célèbre*; but it stirred all England in its day and the majority of public opinion leant strongly to the side of Bob—as almost everybody knew him, for he had committed no offence against the Rules of Racing. Many years later, it is not uninteresting to record, a certain trainer who had lost his licence—he had been accused of being a party to the doping of a horse—brought an action for libel against the Stewards of the Jockey Club, against the printers and publishers of the *Racing Calendar*, and against a newspaper publishing company, in respect of the words in which the warning-off notice in his case had been printed. He won his case and was awarded substantial damages—£16,000. However, the matter was taken to the Court of Appeal, where the damages were reduced by consent. Some time afterwards the *Racing Calendar* announced that the Stewards of the Jockey Club had withdrawn the sentence warning-off the trainer. That withdrawal of the notice left him free to apply for a trainer's licence.

There is, of course, no legal authority behind these sporting tribunals. They are self-constituted bodies and they enjoy no such special privileges as, for instance, the Disciplinary Committee of the Law Society (solicitors being officers of the Supreme Court). But in racing, short of there being grounds for a libel action, any person warned-off would find it difficult to rehabilitate himself by means of appeal to the English courts.

I don't for one minute suggest that the Stewards of the Jockey Club should not be invested with the authority to keep their house in order; the danger lies in the fact that the charges they bring against a man are not heard in open Court, nor on legally sworn evidence. In such cases, there is at least a danger of false witness and spite.

What happened in the affair of Robert Standish Sievier? He remained off the Turf, officially, a matter of eight years, before being reinstated. A new generation of Stewards then came into the Jockey Club and Bob acquired Fitzroy House,

Newmarket, where, as his own trainer, he succeeded in turning out some big winners.

But during the years he spent in the wilderness, he satisfied his lust for revenge upon society in a way that caused vast amusement to the public and doubtless much uneasiness of mind to his victims. He started a paper called the *Winning Post*, an organ of Rabelaisian tendency which also specialized in attacking men prominent in the sporting world with whom he had been at loggerheads. Open letters entitled "Celebrities in Glass Houses", in addition to biting cartoons by "The Snark", were a prominent feature of the paper.

He went bald-headed for the South African millionaires who were now beginning to make a splash on the English Turf, in particular Solly and Jack Joel. The latter gentleman came in for the worst bucketing of all for the reason that he had induced Sievier's very able trainer, Charles Morton, to enter his service. There had been suggestions that Mr. J. B. Joel should buy Sceptre; he had told Sievier that he would give him 10,000 guineas for the filly "and chance it".

With the publication of the *Winning Post* the feud broke out afresh. The attacks on the Joels provided all London with much spicy reading and they reached the stage when "Uncle Jack", as J. B. Joel was called by his friends, attempted to buy-off the instigator-in-chief. Sievier during this time found an invaluable ally in his campaign against the Rand magnates supposed to be polluting the fountains of English society, in one Louis Cohen, who had been a partner of the Barney Barnato responsible for the Joel millions.

It was a labour of love for this pair to belabour the diamond dynasty, Cohen owing to a grievance that he had lost all his money with them, Sievier because of his personal quarrel. Eventually, however, the matter reached the stage of the *Winning Post* Editor being arrested for attempted blackmail of the gentleman he described in his paper as "Promising Jack".

A trap was laid for Sievier at the Mayfair mansion of the aggrieved one, where an ex-Scotland Yard detective had been planted to hear a specially-planned conversation which would incriminate Siever beyond all reparation. On the

strength of this doubtful evidence, Sievier was arrested on Sandown Park racecourse, taken to Bow Street, and ultimately released on £10,000 bail.

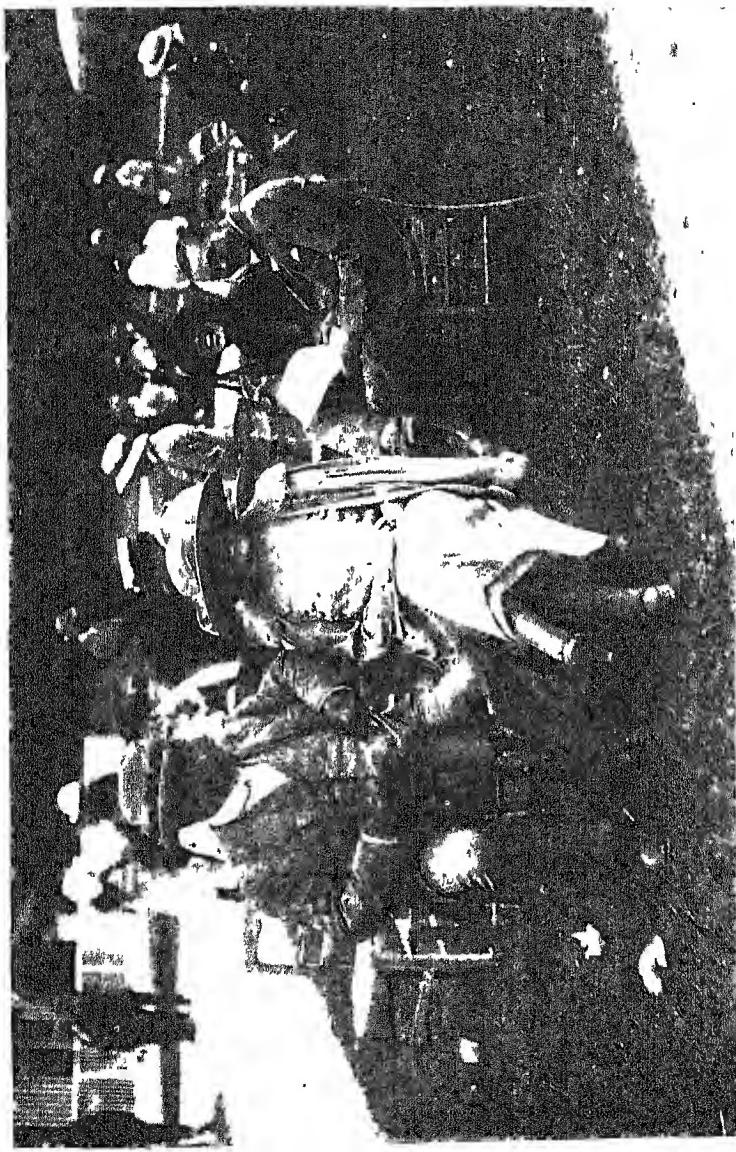
If Joel imagined that he had snared his man, he little knew Sievier. Sir Rufus Isaacs, then at the pinnacle of his fame, accepted the brief for the defence. London cocked up its ears and prepared for some spicy revelations when the big-wigs of the Bar began their cross-examination.

Nor were the citizens of our capital disappointed. Mr. Joel underwent a most damaging time at the hands of the redoubtable Rufus Isaacs; half-way through the case he was heartily wishing himself out of it. Sievier remained confident of acquittal from the very beginning and a strong "claque" in court murmured approval of all he said. From the Lord Chief Justice there came a strong, impartial summing-up and when the jury returned into court with a verdict of "Not Guilty", there was a storm of applause unknown in the annals of the Old Bailey. Sievier departed from Newgate in the manner of a victorious soldier returning from a hard-fought campaign. He distributed sovereign tips to the police; the favourite had got home and everybody was happy, except, perhaps, the prosecutor and his friends.

Of course, it was all too infernally foolish for words. Five years later, again through something in the *Winning Post*, Sievier found himself making another appearance in the Courts. This time he had an action for libel to face, brought by the Anglo-Australian trainer, Richard Wootton. There had appeared in the *Winning Post* a cartoon of a racecourse board showing the runners and riders of a race which the Editor was pleased to describe as the Ali Baba Stakes; the alleged libel consisted of the fact that eight of the jockeys whose actual names were in the cartoon, were apprentices of Wootton's.

This was what might be termed the culminating point of the considerable ill-feeling which had grown up between the two men. Sievier was entirely to blame; he had taken to making himself too free of Treadwell House, the Epsom establishment that Wootton owned, and on receiving an intimation that he was no longer a welcome visitor there, he began a long series of attacks in the *Winning Post*.

The trial of the case, with Sievier conducting his own



Robert Standish Sievier (in foreground)

ONE HUNDRED
DOLLARS

ONE HUNDRED
DOLLARS

50 JUN 1919

20 JUN 1919

J. Alcock, M.A.B.

ONE HUNDRED
DOLLARS



The first air mail, brought over by Alcock and Whitten Brown 1919

defence, provided endless amusement for the racing fraternity; despite the expensive assistance of the famous F. E. Smith K.C., Wootton achieved nothing but a moral victory. He got one farthing damages.

Still, he, too, was a determined man. He set out to destroy Sievier for good, and to that end had printed a pamphlet which gave, long and lovingly, a record of all the sins that his enemy was supposed to have committed in both England and Australia. This indictment was on sale in the streets for one penny, in addition to being surreptitiously nailed up all over the racecourses. So another libel action became necessary.

It came off in 1920 and piquancy was added to the situation by the fact that Sir Rufus Isaacs had now become Lord Chief Justice of England; it is not unreasonable to suppose that Sievier's troubles now left him cold.

He wearily said to the plaintiff, who was addressing the Court at great and unnecessary length and apologizing therefor: "Never mind that: if I am not hearing your case I am hearing another's. I only wish in your own interest to advise you to keep to the issue."

Sievier conducted his own case and the jury probably thought poetic justice would be satisfied by giving him back the money he had lost to Wootton—one farthing. The only people who reaped any benefit from these two ridiculous law-suits were the lawyers; the costs in all amounted to the staggering sum of £15,000!

In 1912 Sievier had won the Cesarewitch with his horse Warlingham and charged the Ring £40,000 for their temerity in allowing the animal to start at 33 to 1. He always pursued his picturesque path in spite of his ups and downs, and astounded his friends where he acquired the ambition to become a member of Parliament. The constituency he picked upon was Hoxton, where the electors rather favoured a man with such a colourful history. He polled very well indeed at the Khaki Election of 1918; what beat him was the lack of the "Coupon" to which I have referred in a previous chapter.

In the East End he made, during his political campaign, the acquaintance of a wholesale provision merchant named

Sir Henry Busby Bird. This gentleman possessed the distinction of having been twelve times Mayor of Shoreditch, and whether because of this, or in spite of it, he received the honour of a knighthood. Sievier succeeded in interesting the "Rajah", as he dubbed him, in the Sport of Kings. Fitzroy House, as well as some good horses, came Sir Henry's way. He was the owner of Monarch, a first-class two-year-old; but at the finish he seems to have come to the conclusion that he would soon have no money left if he persevered long enough.

And so time went on. Sievier had to leave Fitzroy House; all the old impressive surroundings had to go. He came to anchor on a small property at Hurstpierpoint, in Sussex. Here on one notable occasion arrived a myrmidon from the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy anxious to know how he still managed to live fairly well.

Bob put the man up for the night and in the morning said to him: "Now look, old Hoss, I'm going to Gatwick races, where there's a couple of good things running. Don't go away; I dare say I'll have some money for you by to-night. And while I'm gone, if you want something to do, you can weed the garden."

Of course, he was utterly impossible. I got him a nice little post on a Sunday paper to write the racing notes—£1,000 a year and expenses. That didn't satisfy him; he wanted to draw his money £500 a time in advance.

Then he became seized with the idea that Hollywood anxiously awaited his coming. They had never even heard of him in Celluloid City, which was a sad blow. Still, he was always cheery, with never a word of complaint. He found the money to resurrect the defunct *Winning Post*; the venture might have been successful if he had understood modern journalism. It was the same on the racecourse; the generation he had known so well was passing away. Most of the bookmakers now came from Whitechapel and they liked their bets from him in ready money.

Shall we ever see his like again? I doubt it. The free-and-easy days of the Turf that made him possible now hardly exist. Even the gatemen at the meetings took to asking him for a ticket, which was another blow to his pride. I went

one day to Newmarket with him, when one of the men on the entrance held him up.

"What's the matter?" asked Bob.

"Your ticket, sir, please."

"How long have you been on this job?"

"Only a few times, sir."

"Well," said Bob, passing through without any further ado, "I've been coming to Newmarket races for fifty years, and when you've been here that long, you'll probably know who I am."

CHAPTER IX

Two stranger specimens of the millionaire than Jack and Solly Joel it would be impossible to imagine. Casting a cursory glance at them, and talking to them, you said to yourself: "It can't be true. These men can't be multi-millionaires."

Yet they were, though to be sure it was not they who had made the millions. Vast riches had been handed to them on a plate by the cousin who had migrated from Whitechapel to Kimberley in the early 'seventies, that incongruous creature Barnett Isaacs, better known as Barney Barnato.

Neither of the Joel brothers saw South Africa until some years after Barnato had become a power in Kimberley. Jack was the first to arrive, in the middle 'eighties. His brother never went to Diamond City at all until the famous De Beers Company, with Cecil Rhodes at its head, had come into existence. Solly, the younger of the three Joel brothers—himself, Jack and Woolf—took up his quarters on the Rand, where the Barnato influence was manifesting itself in no uncertain manner.

Tragedy overtook this tragic family quickly enough. Barney Barnato committed suicide on the way home to England, throwing himself overboard from the *S.S. Scot* under the delusion that he was about to lose his millions. Woolf Joel lost his life in Johannesburg at the hands of an international adventurer named Franz von Veltheim, who

was tried for murder and acquitted. This left Jack and Solly Joel, with the other Barnato cousin, Harry, in control of an enormous fortune which has become a byword in the British Empire. It would be no exaggeration to say that the riches which Barney Barnato began amassing in Kimberley in 1872 have amounted to well over £100,000,000.

Most of the South African millionaires have gone the way of all flesh. Sir Joseph Robinson, known as the "Old Buccaneer", realized all his interests during the Great War and died in 1929 with £10,000,000 in hard cash standing in his name. Sir Julius Wernher, one of De Beers magnates who succeeded Cecil Rhodes, cut up to the tune of £8,000,000; his partner Otto Beit, lagged slightly behind with £6,000,000. And there were many more, the Ecksteins, the Lionel Phillips, the George Farrars, who all amassed fortunes, but mainly on the Rand.

All this seems unbelievable when you think that one of the real pioneers of South Africa died with nothing in 1917. The man I mean is Dr. Jameson, the *fidus Achates* of Rhodes, the leader of the much-discussed Jameson Raid, who became Premier of Cape Colony.

I met Dr. Jim in 1917, just before he died. Practically forgotten by the British public, but to me a potent name, he was in charge of a Red Cross organization in Thurloe Road, Kensington. I had occasion to interview him on some minor matter and you may be sure I gazed at him with consuming interest. Slightly over middle height, bald, with a small grey moustache, it was his eyes which attracted my attention more than anything else. They were deep-set, but very gentle, with the flicker of a smile in them now and again. He was a tired man; life had run its course and I did not feel greatly surprised a few weeks later when he suddenly passed away.

Forty years previously, he had been a doctor in Kimberley when the diamond fields were overrun with the sweepings of Europe. Little if any, of the huge riches that were made by so many came his way; he died a poor man, conscious, perhaps, that his fame, and that of Rhodes, would endure long after the gold and diamond magnates were dead and forgotten.

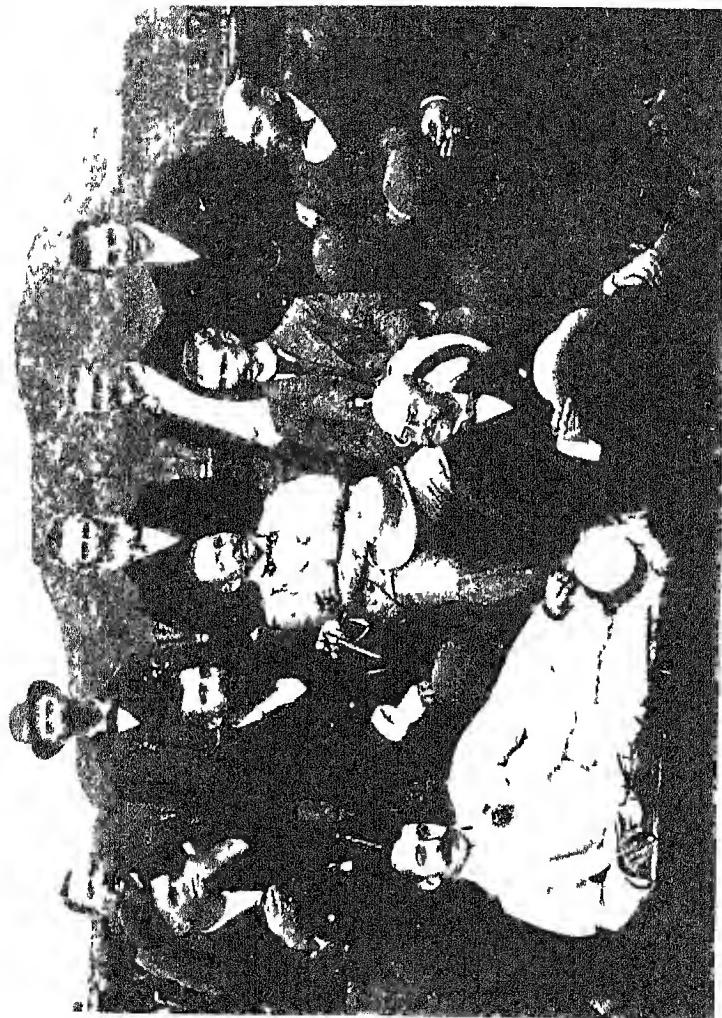
Only a year afterwards I made the acquaintance of the



Dr. L. S. Jameson.

Dr. L. S. Jameson.

Group of Rand pioneers
(S. B. Joel m. white)



multi-millionaire, Solomon Barnato Joel who, I believe, had never even spoken to Dr. Jameson since that historic time when they were Kruger's prisoners in Pretoria.

S. B. Jocel, familiarly known to all as Solly, had quite an air. He dressed extremely well and with his somewhat foreign beard, never really looked like an Englishman. He was very fond of yachting, and unlike most millionaires, he could stand the sea. You could see him at Cowes, Cannes and Deauville, always entertaining a big party of friends. At his country estate, Maiden Erleigh, close to Reading, he gave a tremendous garden party on the Monday of Ascot week, when the champagne flowed like water.

His town house in Stanhope Street, Mayfair, rather an insignificant-looking place for such a wealthy man, impressed me by just one thing. In the dining-room he had an enormous buffet, crowded with the trophies of his racing career. There must have been a hundred of them at least.

"How much has that little lot cost you?" I asked him.

He laughed. "Not so very much," he replied. "I've given the Ring a good knock or two in my time."

So he had; I know of one race, the City and Suburban Handicap he won with the horse he called Maiden Erleigh, which cost the bookmakers £80,000.

His brother Jack, when I visited him at Childwick Bury, told me much the same thing, but even more emphatically —his racing had never cost him a penny.

I dined at Solly Joel's house one night with James White and some of the financiers who were then dabbling in millions. We ate from a long mahogany board decorated with flowers and "S.B.'s" racing colours—pink and green—in ribbons. The food was superb, for our host had a great reputation as a *bon viveur*.

He loved jewels. In his Mayfair home, in a super-strong safe, he kept a box of diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds. If you were an intimate friend, you could see, and even handle, them. But you never took any of them away; Solly saw to that.

In addition to this *maison de luxe*, he owned Moulton Paddocks, the big Newmarket racing establishment owned originally by King Edward's friend, Sir Ernest Cassel.

James White bought it in an idle moment for, I believe, £30,000 and passed it on to the shrewd-minded Solly, who knew a bargain when it came along.

Now, I ran into this Croesus very frequently at White's office in the Strand and it was a source of perpetual amazement to me how he, Solly Joel, a man who for thirty years had been keeping at bay thousands of persuasive gentlemen with gilt-edged propositions, ever succumbed to White's schemes. Yet such was the case; without knowing definitely, I would say that the ex-Rochdale bricklayer cost Solly Joel three or four million pounds. A concern called Amalgamated Cotton Mills alone involved him in losses to the tune of two or three millions!

He may have made money for a time when White's affairs were flourishing—which was not for long—but by 1922, when the big slump hit England like a thunderbolt, all his profits and more had completely disappeared. I don't know that they ever had another deal; not many of the crowds that flocked to 218 Strand at the peak of its fame were to be seen once White's star began to wane.

Jack Joel was never seen at White's office; as he told me himself: "I never fell for him. I knew him when he was promoting fights and I never fancied him as a financier."

At Deauville, lying on the beach sun-bathing with a party of admiring friends, male and female, I once saw Solly Joel order a round of drinks for which he was well and truly robbed to the extent of 500 francs.

"How much?" he asked sharply.

"Cinq cent francs, Monsieur Joel," said the waiter with impudent assurance.

Solly took five 100-franc notes from the coat beneath his head; then he fished out a one-franc coin and said to the waiter: "I don't believe in paying two lots of thieves at once." You couldn't blame him!

One of his intimates, an American of whom he was very fond, inveigled his son Woolf into a game of chemin-de-fer which cost the boy £3,000. There was another gentleman in this unsavoury business, a professional card-sharper. Solly didn't mind the money so much as the fact that this American had stayed at his houses, lived aboard his yacht, and been treated as an honoured guest. He would even have

pardoned the offender if he had come and confessed his sin. But when, instead of doing this, the guilty one fled to Paris, Solly had him extradited and sent to prison for eighteen months. The other crook received a richly-deserved dose of penal servitude.

He loved the theatre; in his younger days, before Barney Barnato took him into partnership, he used to act a little and haunt the West End theatres. His first wife was on the boards and almost up to the end of his days he was interested in the stage. He and his brother Jack controlled Drury Lane, as well as several other West End houses.

Many small strokes of luck came his way, as they frequently do with millionaires. That celebrated pillar of Tattersall's, Mr. Somerville Tattersall, made, yes, made him buy a horse called Polymelus for 4,200 guineas. He turned out to be worth 40,000 guineas and more; he was the most successful sire of his time. Solly Joel also won the Gold Cup with his colt Bachelor's Button, beating the champion Pretty Polly, to the dismay of aristocratic Ascot.

Yet with all this, when you could say: "What more does any man want of life?" he was an unhappy, moody fellow. His domestic affairs were a perpetual worry and there also hung over him the dire fate of his brother Woolf. The man who had killed him had frequently written him letters that he, too, would die.

But nothing happened until 1907, just as Solly Joel began making his mark on the English Turf. Early in June of that year he received a letter from Odessa signed "F. von Veltheim". One can well imagine his feelings when he realized that the desperado who had killed his brother was still at large and, apparently, as dangerous as ever. It was a long-winded communication, full of vague insinuations and threats. Von Veltheim wanted £16,000. How he arrived at the amount was a mystery; he said that £12,000 had been owing to him since 1898, while the remaining £4,000 was for interest. Like most blackmailers, he gave no indication where he might be found.

There was only one thing to be done with such a person and that was to run him to earth forthwith. Private detectives went over to Russia and, with the assistance of the Odessa police scoured the city from top to bottom. But not

a trace could they find of Franz von Veltheim. He had evidently cleared out—if he had ever been there.

Then, at long last, there came a chance to catch the blackmailer. Another letter reached Solly Joel, posted from St. Petersburg. Evidently von Veltheim was growing bolder, or perhaps more desperate than ever, for he said that he was sending over to London, not from St. Petersburg but from Antwerp, a man named Bumiller, who would present bills for £16,000 which Mr. Joel would be wise to meet. There was no mistaking the threats of murder and preparations were made to put an end to von Veltheim's activities once and for all.

For all one knows, he may have lied to Bumiller to induce him to come to London, for that individual boldly arrived in London on September 4th, 1907, where he saw Michael Abrahams, the family solicitor. In an adjoining room, although Bumiller did not know it, were Solly Joel and an inspector of the City Police. The precious bill was produced; Mr. Abrahams made an excuse to go out of the room for a minute or two and utilized the opportunity to have the document photographed. So here was a very exciting drama being staged and in all likelihood the only person unconscious of it was von Veltheim's envoy.

Another meeting took place next day, after Bumiller's movements had been shadowed to see if von Veltheim was in London. But he seemed to be alone.

"Do you know anything about this bill?" asked Mr. Abrahams when the two men met the following morning.

"No," replied the Belgian, "except that it was handed to me by von Veltheim. I deal with many such things in the course of my profession."

"Ah," said Mr. Abrahams blandly, "and could you tell us where your client is to be found? We should like to communicate with him."

"I have only an address at an hotel in Antwerp. My instructions are that if the bill is not paid I am to take it back, when my client will present it himself."

"Well, I think you had better do that," said Mr. Abrahams. "We should much prefer to see Mr. von Veltheim," which was no more than the bare truth. A wonderful man was Michael Abrahams!



Solomon Barnato Joel, South African Multi millionaire.



Barney Barnato

So Bumiller went back to Antwerp and, although he probably did not know it, detectives followed him there, dogging his every movement. Still not a trace of von Veltheim! The cafés and hotels were searched for him and the hunt went on for another ten days. Suddenly it was discovered that the wanted man was in Paris and without any waste of time the Surété Générale were requested to arrest him.

Some considerable trouble ensued before the French Government would extradite von Veltheim; at first, believing his story, he was set at liberty, but kept under observation. But then further papers were sent over from London and the big German, to his unutterable dismay, learnt that he would be sent over to England to face the serious charge of blackmail and threatening to murder.

Two months elapsed before the City Police took possession of him. Von Veltheim, still bluffing, asked the Inspector in charge: "What is it all about? The idea of Solly Joel being such a fool as to take action about a letter I wrote to him!"

Evidently he hadn't deemed it possible for him to be trapped. "Solly Joel," he continued, "had an opportunity of making a friend of me. . . . Fancy an innocent letter like that being construed into a threat of murder."

It soon dawned upon him, when he reached London, that he was at last to be brought to book. After being in custody for close on two months, he found himself at the Old Bailey, with three of the most formidable criminals lawyers in England, Charles Gill, Charles Mathews, and Archibald Bodkin, to see that he did not enjoy the same good fortune he had known in Johannesburg. Nevertheless, one could not deny the favourable impression he made on the jury. That such a handsome, debonair man could be a scoundrel of the deepest dye appeared impossible. The story that was unfolded seemed nothing more than the wildest of fiction.

As far as Solly Joel was concerned, there was comparatively little that he could tell about von Veltheim. He knew, of course, all that had taken place in Johannesburg.

Then came the moment when everybody in the crowded court thrilled with interest. Von Veltheim, the picture of self-possession, went into the witness box, to tell his story.

According to him—and he was about the greatest liar ever known at the Old Bailey—he had met Barney Barnato in London in 1896, the medium of introduction being a diplomat whose name he was under a pledge not to reveal! He told Barney that he could settle all the troubles on the Rand, for had he not in South America already staged two successful revolutions?

The two men went on talking—so von Veltheim said—and Barney asked him what it would cost to depose Paul Kruger.

"I could do the job for half a million," replied von Veltheim.

"It would be cheap at a million," Barney was supposed to have said. Subsequently, said von Veltheim, he was paid £500 on account and two other similar sums. When he received the last, he also had instructions to go out to Cape Town in 1897, there to meet Barney and make arrangements for changing the Boer Government.

It is not unreasonable to assume, therefore, that the whole scheme had been one evolved out of his wicked brain; in short, that he had gone first of all to Woolf Joel and informed him that he had been commissioned by Barney to kidnap Kruger and set up a president more to the liking of the Uitlanders. The unfortunate part of this wild story, from von Veltheim's standpoint, lay in the fact that he could not produce a single witness, or even one scrap of paper, to corroborate his tale. Barney Barnato was dead; Woolf Joel he had killed himself; Paul Kruger had died a lonely exile, and even the mysterious diplomat who had introduced him to Barney could not come into court to convince the world that he spoke any semblance of the truth.

The Boer government, he alleged, would have given him a million pounds to betray the persons who were plotting to abduct their president, but with a fidelity somewhat remarkable in the circumstances, he refused to take the money. Who could wonder, then, that after Mr. Justice Phillimore had delivered himself of a masterly summing-up—one, be it remarked, of scrupulous fairness—the jury should take no more than twenty minutes to come back into the densely-packed court with a verdict of guilty. As the judge rightly said, there was no evidence whatever that Barney Barnato

had taken part in upsetting the Boer Government. He had always been on friendly terms with Kruger—which was no more than the bare truth—and therefore von Veltheim's whole story fell to the ground.

He had undoubtedly come to the end of his tether when the Paris police apprehended him in 1907, for the only money in his possession was £5. But he still had his impudent assurance; that remained with him until Mr. Justice Phillimore passed sentence upon him in February the next year. When the judge informed him that he would be kept in penal servitude for twenty years, he staggered and had to be taken down to the cells in a state of collapse. Right up to the last he seemed to imagine he would be acquitted, but he must have been imbued with a strange idea of British juries to think he could again be so lucky as he had been in Johannesburg in 1898.

And in all likelihood the stern-faced Mr. Justice Phillimore, in giving him twenty years' penal servitude, had in mind the undoubted truth that he had wrongfully escaped punishment in Africa. Whatever the reason, he gave von Veltheim the maximum punishment which the law allows and there were few people who did not agree with him. Von Veltheim died in a Hamburg lodging house in 1927, penniless and friendless.

I came to know J. B. Joel in a somewhat peculiar manner. Finding it necessary to visit Brighton during the Sussex Fortnight with the redoubtable Bob Sievier, I ran into his erstwhile trainer, the famous Charles Morton.

They were the best of friends, despite all that happened twenty years previously between Joel and Sievier. Morton and I got to talking quite a lot and it occurred to me that here was a first-class racing story. He had trained the horses of many notable people in his sixty years of the Turf—he was then seventy-five—including the notorious “Squire” (Abington Baird), Colonel North (the Nitrate King), Mrs. Langtry, Boss Croker, Bob Sievier and J. B. Joel. He had won no fewer than eleven Classic races for the latter gentleman, among them the Derby twice, with Sunstar and Humorist.

A quaint character, I discovered, one of those old-time

racing men indifferent to the Gregorian Calendar. Dates with him were the year that old Bill Smith won the Cesarewitch with So-and-So—Turf times all the world over. But he was a real good raconteur with the right audience; he had plenty of dry humour, a wonderful memory, and a fine gift of describing people and their little eccentricities.

I suggested that I should write his reminiscences for him. He was not averse to the idea—we got on very well together—but said it would be necessary to consult Mr. Joel. He had just retired in receipt of a most generous pension. Terms agreeable to both of us were mentioned and I was to await the decision of his employer.

I received an invitation to call and see the latter at the office of Messrs. Barnato Brothers in Austin Friars, one of those winding City byways which are *terra incognita* to the stranger.

Curiosity filled my soul, having heard so much of the iniquities of Jack Joel from the other side—I mean Sievier. I found myself shaking hands with an exceedingly shrewd-faced man about sixty, bright in the eye, very much alert, and outstandingly cordial. The office was comfortable, nothing more.

He called for half a bottle of champagne, which we duly dispatched. "How much are you going to pay Morton?" he inquired. "I've got to look after his interests."

I said I fancied that Charles could do that very well himself; anyhow, I mentioned the figure, at which Mr. Joel shook his head.

"I would give him three times that amount myself," he remarked.

"And would you care to write the story?" I said to that.

"Good God, no," was the reply. We left it there.

I am only relating this trivial anecdote to show that, like most of the millionaires I have met in my variegated career, he was a hard bargainer. Outside business, however, he could be extremely generous. I knew him to make a present of £25,000 to the widow of an old friend—a man who had left her none to well-off. And he didn't advertise the fact! He was lavishness personified to his trainer and jockeys; he presented Morton with a £1,500 car the year he won the St. Leger with Your Majesty.

We had a long and most interesting conversation, though I didn't bother asking him for any Stock Exchange tips. He told me, among many other things, that he never went out to lunch like his brother Solly.

"More often than not," he added, "I have a couple of grilled herrings sent in, with a bottle of beer."

"You'd better come out to Childwick Bury for a few days," he continued. "I'd like to show you round the Stud and at the same time tell you a few things about my horses."

At the ensuing week-end, in company with Morton, I arrived at historic Childwick Bury, for long the residence of Sir John Blundell Maple. The house, a solidly-built, square pile, stood in the centre of a huge park. There were numerous yards of horse-boxes, paddocks for the brood mares, a magnificent greenhouse, and a home farm. Certainly Mr. J. B. Joel knew how to enjoy the life of a country gentleman. In addition to racehorses, he bred Alsatian dogs—a breed I personally detest. He had a stable-yard full of them; they came tearing up to sniff at the stranger within the gates, until their owner ordered them to be off. Racing pigeons also interested this modern Midas, a curious hobby for such a man, who handled millions by day and spent his summer evenings roaming around his pets.

In addition to these activities, he was a Justice of the Peace and, I understand, looked with a lenient eye on the offenders who came before him at St. Albans hard by.

Around the Stud itself I saw the famous Sunstar, winner of the Two Thousand Guineas and that throbbing Derby I had seen in 1911. He had just about finished his career as a sire and in fact, he was destroyed during my stay at Childwick Bury. Monuments had been erected in the park to other notable horses he had owned, to Humorist, tragic winner of the 1921 Derby, who died of consumption a few weeks afterwards; to old Dean Swift, one of the greatest handicappers of his time; to Doris, the priceless little brood mare who presented Jack Joel with nothing but winners; to Princess Dorrie, victor in the One Thousand Guineas and the Oaks.

We walked in and out of the boxes where the mares and the yearlings were stabled and Mr. Joel remarked: "I'll win the Derby again before I die." He never did; the

winning strain had gone from his stud, his dams were practically useless. He and his brother gave 12,500 guineas for an animal named Oojah, when Sir Edward Hulton sold up his stud about this period. Twelve thousand pence represented Oojah's real value as a sire.

He asked me if I would like a nice yearling. I said "Yes," and chose one that looked the goods and also turned out an arrant failure on the Turf, Firefiend, to wit. Just as well I never took the brute away!

An extraordinary personality, this J. B. Joel. Self-opiniated to a degree, extremely well-read when you came to talk with him, he would never take part in the public life that his brother was so fond of. Solly revelled in Continental life; Jack stayed at home, contenting himself as far as society was concerned with dinner parties to his intimate friends. He and Sir Abe Bailey were close cronies and, I have no doubt, put their heads together in many a lucrative little scheme.

I asked Jack Joel on one occasion if he could induce Bailey to let me write his eventful existence. Sir Abe's retort to the idea was characteristic of his forceful nature. "I am not dead yet," he replied, "and not thinking of dying. When I am dead and gone will be time enough to write about me."

A tough proposition, this ruddy-skinned, white-haired old African pioneer—short-tempered, impatient of opposition, but with a charming smile which transformed his rather forbidding face. His determination was just terrific; as the world will remember, he was a martyr to phlebitis for many years. Both his legs were amputated, yet he still carried on, travelling between England and the Cape attending to his innumerable affairs. He spent a small fortune in telephone calls to South Africa and remained the master of his fortune right up to the day of his death. All his life he tried to win the Derby, yet never succeeded, any more than did Solly Joel with the exception of the substitute Derby he won in 1915 with Pommern.

They lived well at Childwick Bury. The first morning I came down to breakfast, after a visit to the greenhouses to eat a juicy nectarine or two, I found a buffet fairly loaded

with appetizing items. My host said: "What are you going to have?"

My eye came to rest on a large dish of cold plaice, huge cuts across the bone, cooked in the fashion that only the Jews understand.

"That," I remarked, "will just about do me."

"You're a damned good judge," said Mr. Joel. "It's exactly what I'm going to have myself."

Talking to him a good deal afterwards, I discovered him to be a surprisingly good judge of bloodstock, far more so, indeed, than his brother. Solly preferred ready-made winners; Jack liked to breed his own. He had a phenomenal run of good fortune for some years while Morton trained for him; but when the latter left his famous old thatched place at Letcombe Regis, just outside Wantage, to live at Brighton, the spell was broken. The horses were sent to Foxhill in Wiltshire, the establishment which James White had owned, in charge of Charles Peck. The latter, a bachelor, had neither the money, nor the inclination, to live in the ornate house which White had re-built when the millions were coming his way; he compromised on the lodge which stood at the main entrance.

Yes, a strange admixture of the human qualities was J. B. Joel. He took a considerable part in choosing plays for Drury Lane, as well as the players. "Rose Marie" and the "Desert Song" in production were closely watched by him and he didn't mind what he spent provided a profit seemed on the way.

Among other little idiosyncrasies he possessed was the writing of his personal letters by hand, almost invariably at night. At his Mayfair house, 34, Grosvenor Square—which was knocked out in the London "blitz" in the autumn of 1940—he kept great cellars of champagne, not to drink himself, but to sell. He would buy up a popular brand of good vintage, keep it until the market took a substantial rise, and then take his profit. There were times when he had £100,000 worth of "The Widow" in his cellars. Cigars also claimed his attention; half the dealers in London came to him when a good Havana crop awaited a read-money customer.

He would never involve himself in the innumerable risky promotions that his brother favoured. Solly at one time,

as I have already told, could probably have written a cheque for £10,000,000. Yet when he died in 1931 and I wrote the story of his fairy-like fortune, it was evident that he had become a comparatively poor man. A substantial share of his money had gone, however, into keeping up the diamond market in 1926-7, when the tremendous finds of alluvial stones in South-west Africa threatened to kill the whole industry. The Joels and their associates, by agreement with the Union Government, put up £8,000,000 to save diamonds from deteriorating in value to nothing. The rush was stopped by troops and mounted police and diamonds all the world over still retained their worth. The industry is now controlled by the Diamond Corporation under the ægis of the able Sir Ernest Oppenheimer.

Jack Joel, Solly's senior—a fact very few people realized—left behind him close on £5,000,000. He lived to see a development that few people could have foreseen—the doubling in price of gold, and consequently a tremendous increase in the fortunes of this extraordinary family, or families, I should say, for the Barnatos also reaped immense gain from the time that the world began going off the gold standard.

The last time I saw him was at Goodwood races. He looked a lonely man. We had a few words together. From time to time I corresponded with him, though I never asked a favour of him. The book I wrote for his trainer, *My Sixty Years of the Turf*, was one of the best-reviewed volumes of the year and, as a parting tribute to my literary craftsmanship, the Turf Correspondents, who mostly wrote the notices, said that it was Charles Morton to the life.

Morton's closing years were none too happy. Instead of the substantial fortune he should have possessed, he died with nothing. Once he was out of the game, his fine judgment went with it. However, J. B. Joel treated his widow most handsomely, as he did many other people who were left impoverished through no fault of their own.

None of these old South African millionaires are left. The time may come, and before very long, when all the immense riches of the Rand will cease to be in the hands of a few people. The Africander element has again become a potent force in Union politics; it just remains, to be seen what will

happen in the new world that will take the place of the old. We may well reach the stage when the people will say "the earth is ours, and the fullness thereof." However, I am nothing more than a chronicler of the passing times.

One day, perhaps, Hollywood will film this epoch of a mighty Empire that arose out of diamonds and gold. No other dominion of the British Commonwealth has ever come into being so romantically; none has been more bitterly fought for. It may well be that South Africa would never have been ours but for the treasures of the earth that the Almighty scattered so freely around this land inhabited by the Kaffir, the Zulu and the Hottentot.

But that is the way of the Empire eagle; it must go where riches and sustenance are to be found, bringing with it many things which send a blush to the brow of the people to whom imperialism is a doubtful blessing.

CHAPTER X

BENCH AND BAR AND THE REAL SCOTLAND YARD

JOURNALISM such as I indulged in naturally took me into the Courts a good deal. My outstanding impression of the Bar is that it is about the most difficult profession on earth in which to achieve notable success.

I say this for a variety of reasons. A barrister must first of all possess a keen, analytical brain, allied to a profound memory. He requires immense confidence in himself, and, unless his elocution is good, he can be an unending source of irritation to judges and juries. His knowledge of law requires constant replenishing; his tactfulness must be worthy of the diplomatic service.

Hundreds of men who are "called" by the various Inns never make any sort of name for themselves. They just drift out, some to accept small official posts, others, realizing their unfitness for the law, to take up some other occupation. Success at the Bar, despite all their talents, is frequently denied to men who are unable to make themselves known to worth-while solicitors. Here, of course, is where the Press

frequently plays its part. A judiciously-worded report of a prominent case cleverly won by Mr. So-and-so has often been the turning point in many a legal career.

Viscount Simon, Sir Edward Marshall-Hall, and Sir William Jowitt, are three of the memorable figures I have seen in the Courts in my time. The first is not only the greatest lawyer in Britain: he is, or was, the most persuasive advocate I have ever listened to. He could coax a verdict out of almost any jury. Only now and again, however, did he appear in a criminal case, and then in the capacity of a Law Officer of the Crown.

Marshall-Hall could be seen at his best defending in a murder trial. He realized, I think, that the strict letter of the law would rarely avail to obtain an acquittal; his tactics, therefore, usually took the form of appealing to the human instincts of his juries. As an actor, he was just superb. You could describe him as the Matheson Lang of the legal world.

Sir William Jowitt is also unforgettable with his wonderful "Court manner", handsome face and illimitable store of learning. He never raises his voice; he might well be your best friend when he is cross-examining you to extract admissions to win his case.

I suppose some people would say I have forgotten the finest advocate of all—F. E. Smith, who became Lord Chancellor and Earl of Birkenhead. But "F. E." deserted the Bar at a comparatively early age to go into politics, and he never went back.

In a way, it represented a tragedy in the life of this superlatively brilliant man, for when he had ceased to be a Law Officer, the big income he had enjoyed was much curtailed. Once he had occupied the Woolsack he could not return to the Bar at all. I remember Lord Dalziel telling me that he, and several more of "F. E.'s" friends, did their best to dissuade him from accepting the post for that reason. However, it was not to be.

Carson had also taken up a political career; he represented a generation of outstanding lawyers who had probably grown a trifle tired of the hard, slogging work that went with forensic fame.

Of the criminal lawyers I have seen—and I have known quite a number of them if only in the journalistic capacity—I

would place Sir Travers Humphreys first for all-round merit. He was probably at his best in the big financial cases; but he did almost everything with equal facility. His handling of figures amazed you.

In 1925 I wrote the Memoirs of the recently-deceased Sir Richard Muir, Senior Counsel to the Treasury. Here, again, was a notable figure in our public life, a Scot who had been a reporter in the Press Gallery and from there fought his way to the top flight of what is known as the Junior Bar. He was a man of sterling principle, scrupulous and methodical to a degree, though unduly ponderous.

In collecting the vast amount of material necessary for his Memoirs, I found but few good stories about him. The best of a bad lot concerned a stifling hot day at the Old Bailey when Muir fainted. A fellow-member of the Bar, on being asked the why and the wherefor, wittily said: "Oh, he's just had one of his prisoners acquitted."

Nevertheless, he prosecuted for the Crown with unflagging energy, for a long time. His greatest murder case was that of Dr. Crippen and the opening questions of his cross-examination to the accused doctor, in a Court hushed to a dramatic stillness, are still vividly remembered. Each answer that Crippen was compelled to make represented a nail in his coffin.

His prosecution of that notorious master-mind of the underworld, Joseph Grizard, in what is known as the Hatton Garden pearl robbery case, was another landmark in his life, on all fours with that of the great bank forgeries carried out by the famous "Dr. Bridgewater." He did not often meet his match; the only person of consequence he never succeeded in defeating was our old friend Horatio Bottomley.

Muir never received a judgeship; he never even took "silk". He did not make any money until the closing years of his life, and then only because he undertook some lucrative defence work. Treasury briefs are certainly plentiful enough, but the fees marked on them would give a fashionable K.C. the shudders.

Few of these Senior Treasury Counsel are ever raised to the King's bench. Sir Horace Avory and Sir Travers Humphreys are about the only two I can recollect. There

are, of course, other appointments for the eligible ones, such as at the Old Bailey and the London Sessions. The chairmanship of the latter usually goes to a well-known criminal lawyer—Sir Henry Curtis-Bennett being a notable example. But generally speaking, the opportunities of judicial preferment are not many. The barrister of the modern generation doesn't linger overlong at the Central Criminal Court; he makes for the King's Bench Division and the Common Law.

Edward Abinger, a barrister for whom I once brought out a book, told me that real success at the Bar was to be found in acquiring a certain amount of fame, going into the House of Commons, and then obtaining one of those well-paid posts which await a man with the right political "pull". Abinger, born Abrahams, had been a schoolmate of Rufus Isaacs and it could hardly have failed to gall him as he watched the meteoric progress of the other man.

Mr. Abinger's book came out under the title of *Forty Years at the Bar*. Not very exciting, I admit. Those eminent booksellers in Charing Cross Road, Messrs. Foyle, improved it a little in their catalogue with *Forty Years at One Bar*. By that time, luckily for them, Mr. Abinger had crossed the Bar, otherwise we might have heard more of the matter.

He was a peculiar and somewhat eccentric sort of creature who lived in a house at Margate, where he kept birds and monkeys. Also, he was a snuff addict, like T. P. O'Connor—and most linotype operators. In his younger days Abinger had been quite successful, especially in murder cases. It seems to have gone to his head; he took to laying down the law to judges, a proceeding which speedily got him into trouble.

In 1911 he conducted the defence of Stinie Morrison on the charge of murdering an old man on Clapham Common—the case that was exciting all England, as I have mentioned in the opening chapter of this book. Morrison must have been acquitted if his counsel had played his cards properly.

Abinger himself admitted to me that he made a fool of himself. But once the mischief was done, he spared no efforts to save Morrison from the scaffold. First of all he went to the Court of Criminal Appeal, without making the slightest impression. He then had an interview with the

Attorney-General, his old friend Rufus Isaacs. The fiat of the Senior Law Officer had to be obtained if the case were to go to the House of Lords, as Abinger hoped.

"I am a Jew, you are a Jew, Morrison is a Jew," he said to Sir Rufus. "There must be no question of racial favouritism about this matter. I want you to make your decision on the merits of the case."

"You need not worry about that," replied the Attorney-General. He refused the authority for which Abinger asked; Morrison's death now seemed inevitable. Interviewing the prisoner in the condemned cell at Wandsworth Prison, Abinger heard for the first time of a forged cheque for £200 which would account for the money found in his possession at the time of his arrest, money which the police contended came from his victim. Morrison said he had not disclosed this vital piece of evidence because he felt confident of acquittal over the murder charge.

The pertinacious Abinger thereupon tackled the Home Secretary, Mr. Winston Churchill, in his private room at the House of Commons. Maybe Mr. Churchill thought what many other people were thinking in England just then—that this sensational case had not been fought out in the calm, judicial atmosphere that English justice demanded. It fairly reeked with lies and counter-lies. Even the termination of the trial, which took place late on a Saturday night—an unprecedented happening for the Old Bailey—was completely in keeping with the drama that had surrounded the affair from its very inception.

In view of the hubbub, and the possibility that Morrison might after all be innocent, Mr. Churchill wisely advised the King to commute the death sentence to one of penal servitude for life. Morrison spent ten years in gaol and then, still rebelling at the flagrant miscarriage of justice which he considered to have been inflicted on him, took to hunger-striking. He died in Parkhurst asserting his complete innocence to the end.

Sir Basil Thomson, who had known Morrison very well some years previously at Dartmoor, told me his opinion of this bitterly-argued crime. "If you had asked me," he said, "to prophesy about a man likely to commit a murder, I should have pointed to Stinie Morrison."

I also questioned Mr. Abinger on the same lines. "About his guilt," he confessed, "there could not be much doubt. What I objected to was the way the police brought their evidence. Morrison never had a chance from the beginning."

Sir Rufus Isaacs, just like F. E. Smith and Sir Edward Carson, had practically finished with the courts when I was blossoming forth in Fleet Street. But I had the pleasure of meeting him once or twice at his house in Curzon Street. He struck me as a man of the most intense nature, smiling but rarely, sparing of speech, and very much the master of any situation. You found it difficult to realize that this was the man who had once been a cabin boy, on a merchant ship bound for India, and that forty years afterwards he had returned there to represent the King as Viceroy.

Abinger once asked him who, out of all the legal opponents he had known in his spectacular career at the Bar, had been his most formidable antagonist. "Easily Sir Edward Clarke," replied Lord Reading.

I often saw old Sir Edward walking briskly up and down the Strand, ninety-odd years of age, with his long Victorian side-whiskers—veritably a relic of a bygone age. He used to go to the Temple to see his son Percival, who succeeded Muir as Treasury Counsel and afterwards became Chairman of the London Sessions. Father and son seen together were astonishingly alike.

Lord Birkenhead could often be met at James White's office in the Strand during the period when that gentleman was a potent attraction to many people in London. The two men had a good deal in common and "Freddy", as White called him, often went yachting with the millionaire.

Sir Henry Dickens, at the Old Bailey, bore no resemblance whatever to his famous father. Nor, I must say, had he any hankering after literature. While I was doing Muir's Memoirs, I wrote to him asking if he could help me; he and Muir were extremely well-known to each other. His reply was interesting:

"My dear Sir,

I have your letter and would like to be of assistance to you. But I find the only way I can keep up with my work

is to forget everything that has happened the day before and my memory of Muir's affairs in the past could not be relied upon."

He was extraordinary well-liked at the Old Bailey; no judge more so. The painstaking care and evident sincerity that he displayed in all his cases showed how conscientiously he took his duty. But I remember one red-letter day in his life when his proverbial patience ran out.

There appeared in the dock before him a beautiful girl charged with many offences of shop-lifting. At first blush, it seemed impossible. Blue-eyed, golden-haired, most expensively dressed, she stood there looking the personification of innocence. The police evidence was that she belonged to a gang of professional shop-lifters who regularly raided the West-End stores.

The case dragged on all day, the prisoner being very well defended. It continued after lunch, and Dickens began to reveal signs of considerable irritability. About four o'clock the two Counsel made their speeches to the jury, followed by the summing-up of the judge. He laid into the lady good and hard.

She didn't appear to mind in the least. Leaning against the rails of the dock, she idly swung a luxurious hand-bag up and down, and continued in that nonchalant attitude while the jury were out considering the verdict.

They were deliberating a very long time, much longer than Dickens liked. Twice he sent his usher out after them to find if they had reached a decision. Maybe he had a bridge party awaiting him at home!

Eventually the jury did come back into court, with a verdict of guilty on all counts. Dickens leant over to the jury box.

"Ah!" he exclaimed somewhat peevishly, "you were a long time making up your minds about this young woman, weren't you? Now you're going to hear something about her."

The jury did. I can still remember the amazement on their faces as a C.I.D. officer got into the witness box and read out a list of twenty-eight prior convictions of this innocent little babe. She, for her part, didn't turn a hair. All the time the

list was being read, Dickens kept nodding to the jury, as if to say "What do you think of that?"

He then turned to the culprit—still totally unconcerned—and said to her: "Long time making up their mind about you, weren't they, young woman? Well, I shan't be so long. You'll go to penal servitude for three years."

This shrinking little violet gave him a Roland for his Oliver. "Yes," she burst out, "and if I do you—old—" making a distinct reflection on the author of David Copperfield, "I hope you're—dead before I—come out."

Sir Henry didn't wait to hear any more; he fairly ran out of Court.

Round about the Old Bailey and the Sessions House one could see many a pathetic creature who still practised as a barrister, living, perhaps, on a single brief during the Sessions. I knew one of these men; somewhere in the dim long ago he had received a brief from a strange solicitor. It lasted him a long time. You could see him walking importantly in the main hall of the Old Bailey as the courts opened, with gown on and this brief under his arm. It always looked a fresh one, and why not? Every Sessions he stripped it of its dirty, dog-eared outer sheet.

Another one I knew could be guaranteed to get you seven years; he was such an unutterable old bore that he used to drive the judges insane. I remember him defending a prisoner—found guilty, of course. Said the Recorder, prior to passing sentence: "You have been ably defended by your brilliant counsel"—my friend got up and took a bow—"but I should not be doing my duty to society if I sentenced you to less than six years' penal servitude."

"Congratulations, old chap," I remarked to "brilliant counsel" outside Wild's court.

"Yes," he said with becoining modesty, "I did the best I could for him." A real lawyer, I should explain, would have got that unfortunate prisoner off with eighteen months.

Detectives are a subject of inexhaustible interest; I mean the real ones, not the comic variety that occupy the minds of novelists, nor even the Sherlock Holmes species that are always able to guide the faltering footsteps of Scotland Yard. Having known a few scores of our most prominent C.I.D.

officers, I can honestly affirm that not a great deal of serious crime goes undetected in London. I will go even further and say that, considering London is the largest city in the world, it contains fewer dangerous criminals, *pro rata*, than New York, Paris or Berlin.

There is little or no corruption in the Metropolitan Police these days; it is rooted out quickly and quietly. A promising man who has gone off the rails just disappears from the Force, maybe with half the pension that would have been his.

They are not overpaid, these London police, even under the new scales. It is the pension that is the real reward. Generally speaking, there are plenty of positions open to first-class detectives on their retirement. They find employment with the big stores or insurance assessors; some take up private work for solicitors, like the famous Chief-Inspector Charles Arrow, who for many years was a confidential agent for Messrs. Lewis and Lewis.

Others, again, occupy their leisure with municipal duties. Two of the prominent men I knew very well, Superintendents J. W. McBrien and John Prothero, joined the ranks of the unpaid branch of the judiciary, where their knowledge of law, and of crime in particular, has been invaluable to their colleagues on the Bench. Mr. McBrien, a burly Irishman, promised me twelve months if I ever appeared in his court to carry out a threat of mine to come and see how he did his job.

Scotland Yard, and the C.I.D. markedly so, has changed a good deal in my time. The old-fashioned policeman—the Cockney type you still see so often in English films, and American also, if it comes to that—just does not, and could not exist to-day. These alleged Cockneys are a silly libel on the Metropolitan Police; they may have been true to type thirty or forty years ago, but they are not now. Every man that is enlisted has to possess a good standard of education, and if he wants promotion he must go on improving himself. He goes up to Scotland Yard, or “Central”, as it is known, to be interviewed by Sir Norman Kendal if he has applied for the Criminal Investigation Department, and there is no success awaiting him if he cannot survive the severe *viva voce* examination that is imposed upon him.

Heaven forbid that I should cast any slurs on the old-timers I have known among London's foremost detectives.

They, after all, were merely the product of their times, when policemen were paid twenty-five shillings a week. To-day it is quite a promising profession, especially, as I have said, the pension end of it.

The type that film producers put on the screen went out with Lord Trenchard. I knew many of them; they had their faults, but I always found them, in the main, an extremely decent lot of fellows who worked exceedingly hard for very little money. And with all deference to Lord Trenchard and his much-criticized Hendon Police College, I still think an ounce of practice to be worth a ton of theory. The highways and byways of real life, and personal contact with the underworld is the best training of all, just the same as it is in London journalism. If we can make good as ordinary reporters, we know most of the ropes.

One of our newspaper proprietors—shortly after being raised to the peerage—thought he would raise the “tone” of his papers by employing Varsity graduates on the reporting staff. A consignment of a dozen of these bright youths, sporting long hair and flowing neckties, duly arrived. I used to see them running up and down the stairs doing the only job they liked, which was carrying bundles of novels which they tore to pieces—metaphorically, not literally—until My Lord, like George Robey, cried “Desist!”

With shame I must also confess that I know no Fleet Street Editor except, perhaps the Editor of *The Times*, who can boast of a University education. They seem to get on fairly well without it.

In the quiet little north London suburb of Palmer's Green —blossoming out now that the Underground Railway has been extended to the very outskirts of our great metropolis —there lives a man whom I consider the finest detective we have ever known.

I will go further, even so far as to say that we shall never see his like again. In all its eighty years of history, Scotland Yard cannot boast of two men of the calibre of Frederick Wensley. He stands alone, with a record of achievement unsurpassed by any detective in the world.

He would, I dare say, be the first to admit that complicated commercial cases were hardly in his line. Like most of the

old-timers of Scotland Yard, he had to learn his trade in the street, and painstakingly make his way to the top by that arduous routine which is the keynote of the Metropolitan Police. There was no Police College at Hendon where well-educated young gentlemen could be put through what might be termed a crammer's course in the detection of crime; no ready-made promotion just around the corner. Wensley made his way from Whitechapel to Whitehall by natural ability and that infinite capacity for taking pains which is so often styled genius.

To the world at large, his name is still associated with the innumerable sensational murder cases he had through his hands. But it was not on these tragedies that his mind dwelt on the day I called to see him at his home in Palmer's Green. I had long known and greatly admired him as a man of the most upright principle who commanded the deepest respect from everybody with whom he had come in contact—criminals as well, if it comes to that.

He had changed but little since his retirement. The once dark hair had silvered, but the dark, piercing eyes were as forceful as ever, as was that unmistakable firm tread known to half the criminals in London. Yes, it was still the same "Mr. Vensley," as the Jews of the East End were wont to call him in the days when he ruled Whitechapel from Leman Street police station.

I wanted him to tell me what he considered the greatest exploit of his forty years in the Criminal Investigation Department, those memorable forty years in which he had risen from a humble constable to the proud position of Chief Constable at Scotland Yard.

Naturally I thought his choice would fall upon one of his famous murder cases. But no; he proceeded to tell me of something that had befallen him back in the old days when Limehouse was Limehouse and when a policeman's lot was not a "happy one."

In 1900 there began a long series of burglaries around North London which drove the Scotland Yard chiefs well-nigh frantic. For eighteen months they went on. One day in Shadwell, Wensley, then a young detective, took heed of some young, impudent-looking foreigners, whom he remembered to have seen before, spending money too freely for

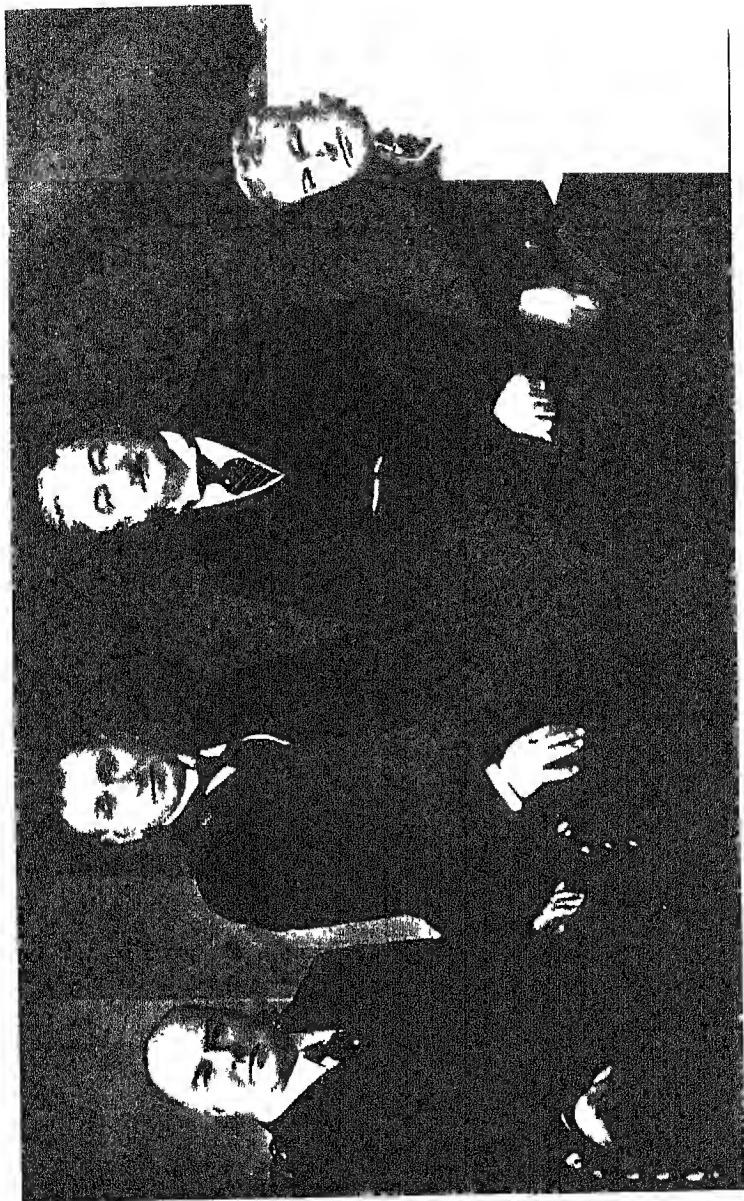
such a poor neighbourhood. The thought struck him that something might be wrong and, against the wishes of his divisional officer, who laughed at his suspicions, he spent weeks of his time, disguised as a street loafer, shadowing the suspects.

The trail eventually led him to a dingy little auctioneer's establishment in Bow. One day, still without any definite evidence to help him, a woman came into Wensley's police station with a tale to tell. She was a "woman scorned", a light o' love of a German seaman who was in reality one of a gang of burglars, all Teutons, working under the leadership of a woman. This enterprising lady was simulating Charlie Peace on the grand scale; she had four scouts at work locating likely "cribs", and no fewer than thirteen husky young Huns to crack them on her behalf.

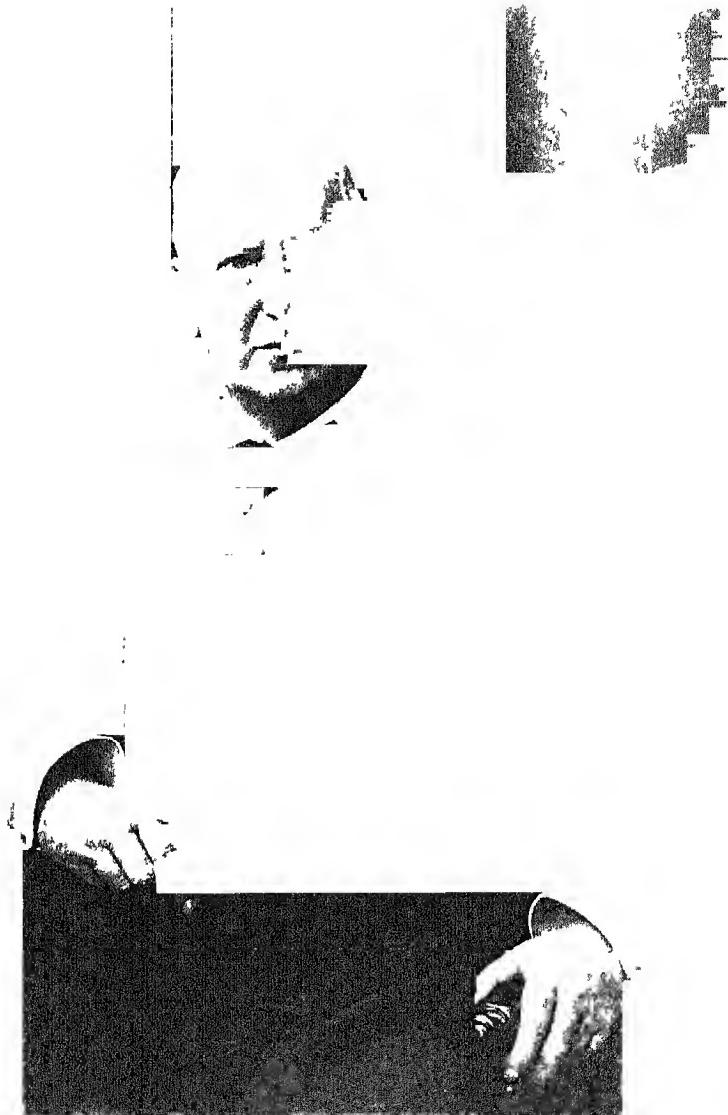
She, it appeared, was the master mind, the female Fagin. One half of the plunder went to the auctioneers, the owner thereof being revealed as her brother, while a convenient sister dealt with the remainder. Wensley told me about an anxious time he underwent just as the arrests were to be made. His father lay dying and it seemed that he would have to absent himself from the death-bed if he participated in the grand swoop that had been planned. But at "Central" the sympathetic superintendent decided to take a chance and postpone the coup until Wensley could be present, a stroke of luck, as it turned out, for the woman had heard whispers of the police being on her track. However, one dark October night a posse of men assembled at the station; one party was to descend upon the place at Shadwell, another to raid the auctioneer's shop at Bow.

"An eerie night," said Wensley reminiscently. "Damp fog in the air, the hoot of sirens from the river. It was three o'clock before we actually moved off. Half a dozen police routed the burglars out from their hiding place and when they were finished with, I took four men to pick up the unlovely female and her equally unpleasant inamorato not far away. Down at Bow, our officers found a furniture van 'at the door of the "fence" which contained proceeds of fifty different burglaries."

All these prisoners were subsequently convicted at the Old Bailey and sentenced to long terms of penal servitude.



Scotland Yard's first "Big Four"
Left to right : Superintendents Hawkins, Wensley, Carlin and Neil



Sir Richard Mun
Senior Counsel to the Treasury

They were the scum of German gaols who had been recruited by this woman in Hamburg and brought to England to commit wholesale burglary; they might have gone on indefinitely with their campaign but for Wensley's intuition. It was the beginning of that astounding career of his, which lasted another thirty years.

One of his greatest successes, though a case which never reached the courts, was restoring to the wealthy Lady Ludlow her valuable collection of antique jewellery, which was stolen from Bath House, Piccadilly, in 1924. It was obviously a robbery planned with considerable cunning, and furthermore, in conjunction with someone thoroughly intimate with the interior of the house.

Wensley in those days rarely concerned himself with anything but major crimes, and this *was* one. He came down on the scene, made two arrests, and recovered the bulk of the property. A big reward was paid by the insurance company involved—but, for reasons which will never be divulged, no prosecution took place.

There is no doubt that Wensley was a formidable person to encounter once he made up his mind to solve a serious case. I wrote a story some years ago of a celebrated cracksmen who had been burgling half the big country houses in England. He worked under the alias of George Smithson; among his numerous victims were Lord Brownlow, the Earl of Jersey, Sir William Bass, Sir Charles Nall-Cain, Lord Henry Nevill, the Duchess of Hamilton and many other well-known people.

The *modus operandi* of this Raffles in real life was beautifully simple. He studied the society columns of the newspapers; when he read that Lord and Lady So-and-so had left for Town, he promptly went and broke into their house. His means of transit was a bicycle! However, retribution duly overtook him, and his confederate, in Scotland. An observant constable, not liking the look of these Sassenachs, brought about their arrest after they had burgled the house of the Earl of Haddington.

They were taken down to London, where in due course they made the acquaintance of the much-dreaded Wensley. Thousands of pounds' worth of valuable pictures and miniatures, irreplaceable relics of the past, such as an old

Saxon bangle, vast quantities of jewellery, had been lifted by these two worthies. By the time Wensley had finished with them, they had confessed all they knew. As Smithson said, he had never met Wensley before and he never wanted to meet him again.

Our old friend Sir Henry Dickens gave Raffles eight years' penal servitude, and added that he was the most dangerous burglar who had ever come before him.

George Cornish, one of Wensley's lieutenants at the Yard, told me a strange story of a swell crook named Barrington. I am not attempting to relate it at length; all I want to do is to prove that it is mostly hard work, and perhaps a slice of luck, that clears up many sensational crimes. A mysterious fire had taken place at the Portman Square house of Countess Benckendorff, the widow of the former Russian Ambassador to London. But it had burnt out only one room—the room where the Countess stored all her valuables, perhaps £5,000 worth.

In a brief space of time, Cornish unearthed quite a thrilling little drama. Countess Benckendorff, it seems, had let her house furnished and the woman who was the tenant had made the acquaintance of the redoubtable Barrington—a criminal with a long record of crime. Knowing nothing of the gentleman's murky past, she appointed him to the post of secretary. His must have been a mixed labour, for, over a period of some months, Barrington gradually purloined all Countess Benckendorff's property and then, deeming it high time to disappear, set fire to the room.

All this slowly but surely revealed itself, with one "burning" question at the end: where was the fascinating Mr. Barrington? He had vanished into thin air and London is a big place. The only tangible clue he left behind was some bank-notes he had received for his plunder.

Still, that is often the kind of position which Scotland Yard has to face. For two months Cornish and his men laboriously ran those notes down without getting on the trail of the elusive one; he had carefully omitted writing anything but false names and addresses on those he negotiated. Salvation came at last from one paid into a bank at Sheen; a woman informed Cornish that she had received it as a month's rent for her houseboat on the river.

Yes, there they found Mr. Barrington—with a girl-friend to keep him company. He had even decorated his abode of love with some of Countess Benckendorff's nice pictures. What a hide out! Who would suspect a man living in a houseboat up the Thames of being a society burglar or of arson? But he had made just that one trifling slip and it cost him ten years of his life.

How is this one for a Somerset Maugham subject? Some few years ago a policeman patrolling Regent Street arrested a woman for soliciting. She was a tall, fair-haired creature, good-looking enough with the paint and powder on, and well-known as a common prostitute. The Marlborough Street stipendiary imposed the customary penalty of forty shillings and the lady passed out of the public gaze.

Six or seven years passed by. The P.C.—who ultimately became one of the Superintendents of the C.I.D. under Wensley—was now a detective-sergeant at Streatham. There came into the station one night, in great distress, a highly-placed Civil Servant whose wife had been receiving a number of disgustingly-worded anonymous letters—real “poison-pen” effusions which read like the ravings of a semi-lunatic. These people had their suspicions of the writer’s identity, a woman with whom they were on fairly friendly terms—as friendly, at any rate, as one can be in a London suburb. However, although the detective-sergeant gave the matter some attention, nothing could be proved.

About five years later, now a detective-inspector at Sutton, he received information about more of these “poison-pen” letters being disseminated, still with no actual clue to the sender. Some of them were addressed to a local clergyman, accusing him of immoral relations with his housekeeper. Others were to well-known ladies in the district and beyond saying that the writer must have possessed the mind of a sewer, the contents can hardly be described.

Scotland Yard was notified of the affair and one of the Chief Inspectors of the C.I.D. came down to Sutton to supervise the trapping of the guilty person. It took a long time. By co-operation with the Post Office detective staff, the letter-box, where most of these disgraceful communica-

cations were posted, was located. Suspicion eventually fastened itself, by the aid of people who had been slandered, on a woman who was the wife of a local official.

The next move was to obtain the evidence that would convict her. To that end, some of the penny stamps in the post office were marked with secret ink; the next time the suspect, or her husband, bought stamps, she was handed some of those marked. It now remained to wait until she posted more of her filthy letters, which might be a matter of some weeks.

So it proved; the Chief-Inspector, tiring of the affair, resumed his duties at "Central", leaving the detective-inspector to carry on as he thought fit. The latter was resolved not to be beaten; he found an empty house in the street, fortunately almost opposite the one he was watching.

Now and again he saw the lady moving about her rooms, but without catching a good look at her face. A fortnight passed by; no more poison letters had been reported to the police; it seemed that all the Inspector's labour would be in vain.

Then suddenly came victory. One afternoon, about four o'clock, a thrill shot through him, as, peering through a blind, he saw the suspect seated at a writing table. She was busy for some time; it was close upon six o'clock before the Inspector could make the next move. He had hoped that the woman would herself post the letters she had written, when he intended to catch her red-handed.

She showed herself too cunning for that; the husband took the letters along to the pillar-box a hundred yards away. He returned to the house and the police slipped out to intercept the postman who would shortly be clearing the box. Back in the post office itself, the damning letters soon revealed themselves, marked stamps and all. The arrest could now take place.

They went to the woman's house and the Inspector nearly dropped dead as he came face to face with her. It was the prostitute he had arrested in Regent Street more than twelve years ago! Older, stouter, and exuding a confident hardness, she had not altered appreciably. The Inspector recognized her immediately, and said to her: "I've seen you before, haven't I?"

"I don't remember you," she replied. "I've met so many men in my life."

"I'll bet you have, too," said the Inspector. "Anyhow, madam, I've got a warrant for your arrest on a charge of sending indecent and libellous letters through the post."

She stormed and she raved; she called upon her meek, thunderstruck little husband to throw this impudent policeman out. But all to no avail; to the station she went, and ultimately to the Guildford Assizes. By now, fear had reduced her to a shadow of her former arrogant, well-dressed self. A doctor's certificate was produced to the Lord Chief Justice of England who had to try her; the judge sternly refused to accept it and ordered that this woman Annie S—— be brought forcibly into Court if she would not come of her own accord.

Carried into the dock she was, screaming like a lunatic, to receive sentence of two years. She died, this incomprehensible creature, only a week or two after the superintendent had told me about her. He regarded this as the strangest case he had ever known, and the best piece^{of} of detective work he had accomplished in his career. I saw the notice of her death in the "Hatch, Match and Despatch", and I said to myself "Well, well! How many people who read that will know who *she* was?"

What had caused her to write these poison letters? One could guess what had occurred with her. She married, and lived at various addresses, forcing herself, no doubt, on many people who soon realized what she had been.

What had happened with her at Streatham had been repeated at Sutton. Those who would not accept her friendship must take the consequences.

Times without number, at Scotland Yard, do the C.I.D. officers hear pathetic stories of lonely women living in cheap London hotels being victimized by smooth-tongued adventurers, and robbed of all they possess.

To catch these rascals, and, what is of greater immediate interest to the victim, recover at least some of the money, is a pretty problem. Most of them disappear off the face of the earth and start operations elsewhere under another false name.

"Central" one day had a visit from a handsome, middle-aged lady, the widow of an Irish doctor. Let us call her Mrs. Fitzpatrick. Living *en pension* in a Kensington hotel, she had made the acquaintance of Don Juan in the shape of a foreigner who called himself Shayler. No doubt she had made a first-class fool of herself; under promises of marriage and a fine profitable "investment" which would safeguard their future, she had parted with all she possessed in the world—the useful little sum of £12,000.

Dead against the advice of her bank manager, she had realized gilt-edge securities and, by instalments, handed over the money to this heartless scoundrel, who disappeared when nothing more remained. The widow's cruse had run out of oil.

She had a photograph of the gentleman; oh, yes, he had left her that as a relic. But it told the police nothing; the C.R.O. officials had no record of such a person in their rogues' gallery. The only clue, indeed, lay in the bank notes that represented the plunder—hundred-pounders.

Those of you who are vexed at being requested to sign a £5 note, will be surprised to know that although this swindling Shayler had received a hundred-and-twenty £100 notes, the police were utterly unable to find him. The notes kept coming into the Bank of England, mostly from big jewellery firms and pawnbrokers in the habit of handling large sums every day. Clearly Mr. Shayler knew how to negotiate dangerous paper. He would make a purchase of jewellery, at a nice profit to the shopkeeper, ostentatiously display a wallet full of £100 notes, and never so much as be asked to write his name on one of them. Sapphires were his speciality; he seemed quite an expert.

Well, this was indeed a worrying job for the Yard. Mr. Cornish put one of his ablest young men on the job, handsome Gordon Hester, a most useful officer to tackle high-class crooks. Hester literally combed London for one single sign of the missing Shayler. Months passed by; it looked as though poor Mrs. Fitzpatrick's money had gone for good.

But Hester continued to worry along. One day the proprietor of an hotel in Euston Road gave tidings of a man who resembled Shayler; he had gone by then, but the proprietor remembered that his guest had bought a quantity

of wines and spirits from a high-class firm of grocers in Wigmore Street. *They* might be able to help.

"I'm very sorry," said the manager of this establishment when Hester tackled him. "We don't usually give any information about our customers."

Under a little gentle persuasion—Hester having quite a winning way with him—he changed his mind and said, when the photograph was shown him: "Oh, yes, I recollect the gentleman. I fancy you may find him at such-and-such a street in Brondesbury. But," he added, "I don't know the exact number."

So off to Brondesbury went Hester, there to find that the thoroughfare he wanted was a very long one, inhabited mainly by fairly prosperous people. He could hardly call at each house in the hope of finding Shayler and, what was equally evident, he might easily lose his man by making his investigations too open. What he did do, with the aid of an intelligent plain-clothes man, was to eliminate all the male residents one by one, with the aid of the photograph in his pocket.

I am telling all this merely to demonstrate what detective work in this twentieth-century Babylon really means. With some eight million people in the area controlled by Scotland Yard, it might be compared to looking for a needle in the proverbial haystack. Beyond a bad snapshot and a description which would fit many thousands of men, Hester had nothing definite.

Still, he worried along until one day but a single house remained under suspicion. Tradesmen went in and out of the place, but of the people themselves no sign could be seen. The next move, therefore, was to keep observation on the house; and here a useful stroke of luck came Hester's way. He had made the acquaintance of a retired railway police official who also lived in the street, and called upon him to ask his assistance.

"A dangerous international swindler!" exclaimed the railwayman. "Nonsense; he's something in the City."

"I dare say he is," said Hester. "Nevertheless, I think he's the man I want."

"All right, you can take the front room to see for yourself." So there began, there and then, a long and trying vigil,

which Hester and his assistant conducted in turn. More than a week elapsed before Hester caught a glimpse of a tall, heavily-built man at an upstairs window. He seemed to be drumming his fingers impatiently on a table, as well he might. To the best of Hester's knowledge, he had not been out of doors for a month.

The next item on the programme to catch this palpably clever and experienced criminal was to interrogate Mrs. Fitzpatrick. Hester made a rendezvous at a West-End hotel, thinking it not unlikely that if he called at her *pension*, Shayler might get wind of the visit.

The woman, by now in a state of great distress, tearfully asked him if he had any news of Shayler and her money.

"I think so," said Hester. "Tell me, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, can you recollect any little mannerisin of his, something such as this?"—moving his fingers up and down on a table like a dancer's legs.

"Good heavens!" she cried. "That's him. He used to irritate me to death with the silly habit. I was always telling him about it."

"That's good enough for me, then," said Hester. "Don't say a word to anybody of what you have told me."

Back at Scotland Yard, he told his Chief—a Superintendent, somewhat annoyed at what had looked like a great waste of time—the inspiring news.

"Good enough," said Cornish. "Go and get the warrant."

Three of them descended upon the flabbergasted Shayler. He may have been expecting them, for he opened the door himself and truculently demanded to know the reason of this sudden intrusion. Cornish quickly enlightened him. There was a woman in the house much interested in Shayler; all the time he was being questioned, she kept clutching at her breast, as though to calm a fluttering heart. But to Cornish it denoted something else.

"What have you got there?" he demanded sharply.

"Nothing, nothing, I assure you. I don't feel very well."

"I don't suppose you do," said Cornish. "Come on, out with it."

Slowly, as one parting with her life's blood, the lady thrust a trembling hand into her blouse. Cornish took what she slowly extracted, all crumpled up, and gave a satisfied

laugh; it was a £500 note. Evidently *her* share of the plunder!

Mr. Shayler was bellicose and bleating by turns. Cornish, never a man to stand on ceremony with this type of thief, ran rude hands over his clothing to see what might be revealed. A bunch of keys came to light, plus a few more useful bank-notes. One of the keys fitted a small safe in the house; this, in its turn, yielded a tasty little collection of the sapphires in which Mr. Shayler had been investing.

He had obviously been waiting for the chance to make his get-away. Further search of the house disclosed a big hamper of silver-plate—another efficacious method of changing £100 notes.

So poor Mrs. Fitzpatrick saw some of her money back. She also saw her one-time admirer sent to prison, and if she felt any pangs of regret at his going, she gave no signs. Hester and Cornish went back to "Central", where doubtless a few more confiding innocents would come along.

That, my friends, is the life of a London detective! There's rarely a royal road to success.

CHAPTER XI

DURING those merry years that followed the Great War, there floated around the City and West-End as mixed and memorable a crowd as London has ever known. The "diamondiferous and auriferous" brigade were well represented by the Joels and their innumerable satellites. From the knowing North came the hard-headed Yorkshire and Lancashire stockbrokers and shipping men, interspersed with a bunch of mill-owners; while from the dear old Metropolis itself there emerged the usual gang of theatricals, jockeys, bookmakers of varying kinds—all intent on picking up an honest penny.

For these, mark you, were the times when real money was in circulation, when the Stock Exchange boomed, and devil-may-care company promoters floated marvellous businesses which would pay fabulous dividends, but didn't.

Fur coats and diamonds were commoner than marbles; motor cars were pushed over to the public by the time-payment dealers with reckless abandon and you could hardly take a prowl around Piccadilly without jostling a millionaire.

The time came, of course, when all this ephemeral prosperity eluded its passing owners, save the hard-headed ones who had taken their profit while the going was good—like the banks, the insurance companies and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. War profiteers who had amassed prodigious fortunes suddenly found themselves confronted inexorably with demands for Excess Profit Duty which stripped them clean. I knew one man who had to disgorge £950,000 at one fell swoop; another, a shipowner, who paid a fine of £750,000. One of our silver-tongued leaders of the Bar pleaded that gaol would surely kill the old gentleman and I dare say the judge rightly thought that as money was the offender's god, the worst punishment he could inflict upon him was to prise off a large lump of the lucre that he had laboriously made out of British seamen's lives.

It is pleasing to record, however, that after this painful operation, the ailing one's health miraculously improved. He lived another eighteen years and left behind him a fortune of £1,500,000.

King of all this splendid host, the magnet—and magnate—that attracted most of the "Get-rich-quick Wallingfords", was the ex-Rochdale bricklayer, James White. He was the Man o' Millions who drew all seekers of easy money to his luxuriously-furnished offices at 218 Strand, directly opposite the Law Courts. They were all ready to back him, listen to his sparkling talk, discuss his racehorses. Some, like the money-changers in the Temple, came to scoff, but remained to pray; others, of more cautious habit, just looked on the passing show, murmuring to themselves: "It can't last. This fellow has got too many irons in the fire."

Fifteen years have elapsed since poor Jim White ended his hectic career and with this time at my disposal to form a sober and proper estimate of his abilities, I often wonder whether he was quite the glorified gambler that he has been

depicted. He certainly lacked patience. I am not saying that he could ever be classed with the Rothschilds and the Pierpont Morgans, for these people, taking them all in all, have confined most of their operations to gilt-edge investments. Better for White if he had possessed some of the cold-blooded prudence of the *haute noblesse* of finance; he would have swept the board.

But with him it was nearly always the quick profit, a failing which possibly emanated from the man who taught him his trade—the self-same Ernest Terah Hooley I have written about in a preceding chapter. Again, White had the misfortune early in his career to be baulked in the development of a splendid idea which had the fault of being a trifle before its time—the demolition of the noisome Covent Garden market and the rebuilding of a spacious centre for the vast fruit and vegetable trade of London.

Through the medium of the St. Helens pill manufacturer, Sir Joseph Beecham, he purchased from the Duke of Bedford for £2,000,000 the entire Covent Garden Estate and at once proceeded with the plans for creating a new market really worthy of London. He found the London County Council, as well as the innumerable stall-holders, violently opposed to his scheme; and with the Great War to add to his difficulties, it had to be dropped. It has taken another war, with all its transport troubles and the dangers of bombing, to prove that White was justified in his ambitious ideas.

Although his great plans for the development of the rubber tyre industry were equally premature, they, too, have come to fruition in other hands. The amalgamation of the Lancashire cotton mills, had it been successfully accomplished in the big way that White visualized, might also have been of incalculable benefit to the industry. Time has since taught us that these basic English industries can no longer, in the face of fierce foreign competition, produce their goods with the indiscriminate lavishness of a bygone era.

I am not denying that many of White's financial wizardries were sheer gambles. They were, as for instance the "pools" he formed in various speculative shares that greatly attracted the public. He and his backers—principally the latter—had some colossal clean-ups in different directions. The Dunlop Rubber Company pool realized £7,500,000 profit; another

holding formed in the shares of the Dunlop American trust brought in just on £7,000,000. From the Mexican Eagle Oil Company came a rake-off of nearly £6,000,000, while the Amalgamated Cotton Mills Ordinary shares brought in to the holders the sum of £4,845,000.

The clever brigade, as I say, cleaned-up and cleared out. White in 1919 had £4,000,000 standing to his credit at the Westminster Bank immediately beneath his offices. I happened to be with him one night when he said to me: "How much do you think I am worth?"

"Your guess is better than mine," I replied.

He pulled out a pass-book, evidently recently made-up, from his desk and showed me the figures £4,000,000. I went home that night saying to myself something I often used to think those times: who would be a journalist? Common sense might have suggested the wisdom of consolidating his position; or, at least, putting away a million or two for the rainy day that would surely come. But big gamblers rarely do such things and in White's case it is doubtful whether he could have afforded to indulge in the process commonly known as "buttoning-up".

In a matter of ten years, from 1917 to 1927, he handled the better part of £150,000,000, out of which, it is reckoned, he and his associates made £35,000,000 profit. His own share could not have been far short of £10,000,000. When he crossed the styx in 1927 he owed at least a million and a half and to this day his affairs have never been properly cleared up.

What manner of man was this baffling character who had a vast fortune in his grasp and let it all slip away? As I knew him extremely well in the days when he had his millions and wrote the story of his romantic life for one of my papers, I think I may presume to answer the question. What is perhaps more important, I had masses of his papers handed over to me and all I have to state regarding his financial dealings have chapter and verse at the back of them.

You want to look at his genesis and his early environment to realize that all this suddenly-acquired wealth might make him unduly reckless.

He was born in Rochdale in 1878, of humble Irish parents who had emigrated to Lancashire to escape the famines. The schooling he had must have been trifling enough, for at the tender age of eleven he turned out to work. He was found employment in a cotton mill, regarded it as too dull, and became a bricklayer. Some twenty-five years later he bought a mill he had helped to build—John Bright & Sons—for £1,250,000.

Still dissatisfied with life, he went off to South Africa, fought through the Boer War, and then made for America. Money continued to elude him and he returned to England. In Manchester he ran into a man after his own heart, the hypnotic Hooley. White acted as his nominee in various estate deals, Hooley being a bankrupt, and eventually, when the ex-millionaire again took up his quarters in London, became one of his factotums. He was beginning now to learn all about stocks and shares, dangerous knowledge for a youngster in the early 'twenties.

Heaven only knows the ups and downs he encountered during the next few years. He left Hooley—that gentleman being desirous of devoting his activities to real estate—and took to promoting fights. It was all gambling; he had no substantial bank balance and only a persuasive tongue enabled him to sign up the big names in the boxing world. He offered Jack Johnson £2,000 to fight Bombadier Wells, the champion of England. Nonconformity in the shape of the Rev. F. B. Meyer raised a tremendous, and quite unnecessary, hullabaloo about the iniquity of a black man thrashing a white; the Home Office notified the poor promoter that the contest must be abandoned.

This was real bad luck for poor Jimmy; he would have made £5,000 out of the fight. Under the terms of the articles, Johnson was entitled to his money whatever occurred. White hadn't go it; instead, he explained the position to the negro, who decently enough agreed to take £500, adding: "It's no use kicking a man when he's down."

There were many more fights that White pulled off, but, as he gradually realized, no fortunes. He returned to the town of his birth where, for a year or two in conjunction with Hooley, he bought and sold property. This came to an end in 1912 when the latter aroused White's Irish blood by

taking away a rich young engineer who looked like being useful to him.

There and then they parted, never to associate again. White, with some money to keep him going for a time, returned to London, with the idea of properly emulating his old master; he would take up his quarters at the Midland Hotel and set the Thames on fire in double-quick time.

Easier said than done. With all his magnetic personality, nobody of any consequence would listen to his schemes. But providence was just around the corner; he was able to do a great service to the famous Tom Beecham, eldest son of the pill millionaire, and Sir Joseph Beecham himself expressed a desire to meet this family benefactor. He came along to the Grand Hotel at Charing Cross where the budding financier now had his headquarters and found himself mightily impressed. They had a few small deals together on mutually beneficial terms, until one day in 1914, when White encountered that well-known financier, Harry Mallaby-Deely. The latter had been casting eyes on the Duke of Bedford's valuable Covent Garden Estate; he had an option on it, with little or no hope of finding the £2,000,000 cash that was asked for the property.

White, on behalf of Sir Joseph Beecham, took the option over, and thus acquired his real start in spectacular finance. The years 1916-17 found him also dabbling in plays and theatres, about which it might be permissible to tell a story or two. White never missed any chances of picking up a few thousands and he firmly believed in the old adage about Satan finding mischief for idle hands to do.

His maiden essay was a play called "Ye Gods". Theatres were hard to obtain and expensive as well. After numerous vicissitudes, the farce dropped anchor at the Strand Theatre. The safety curtain dropped as well, and stuck fast. People demanded their money back and the initial performance, a Saturday *matinée*, thus came to an ignominious end. His manager telephoned to ask "What now?"

"Get another theatre," yelled the infuriated White.

"What, at this time of the day?"

"Don't talk so much; find another place."

There proved to be just one empty theatre in London—the Aldwych, the house that no one could make pay in

those days. White's harassed manager routed out the lessee, arranged terms and then walked into the place to inform a disgruntled old caretaker that "Ye Gods" was opening there that very night.

So it did, with hastily-printed handbills distributed around the London streets to tell people the inspiring news.

Another episode occurred over "The Spring Song". This proving no money-spinner, the enterprising Bernard Hishin, who ran White's theatrical affairs, engaged fifty sandwichmen to liven business up. They carried boards whereon were printed a few bars of Mendelssohn's lilting little tune and, to make sure the ignorant hoi polloi of London knew what was intended, Hishin had them all taught to whistle the melody.

Thinking that his worthy employer would vastly approve of his clever idea, he instructed the men to walk past White's office in the Strand. No such luck! White heard the noise, had a good look, and then rang up his expectant manager to inquire: "What's all this nonsense you're up to now?"

"Advertising the play, of course. What did you think I intended?"

"Keep those so-and-so's whistling all day," bawled White, "and they'll be so damned thirsty that they'll want double wages."

Some years later, when he bought Daly's Theatre, he walked in to the manager's office and cast an interested eye on the bound volumes of all George Edwardes's immortal successes.

"What's this lot?" he asked.

"Why, the plays that have made Daly's famous."

White glanced casually through one of the books and then said to the astounded manager. "I could write all these myself in about three weeks!"

Oscar Asche produced "Cleopatra" for him at Daly's; they had a slight argument about the lady's nationality. Asche, who ought to have known, put her down as a Macedonian Greek.

"She was an Egyptian, I tell you," said his employer.

"Don't talk damned rot," retorted the elephantine Oscar. "Do you think I've been acting Shakespeare for thirty years without knowing all about Cleopatra?"

"All right. Don't get shirty. But she was a bloody bitch, wasn't she?"

Verily, these were memorable days in the Thespian temples.

When things were really humming—from 1918 to 1921—James White's Strand offices were filled every night with the wealthy and the wise—Cabinet Ministers, big City men, Stock Exchange brokers, his favourite jockey Donoghue, and perhaps a journalist or two like Swaffer and myself. About half-past eight, after a long sitting of champagne and Coronas, the party would adjourn to the West End for dinner. White himself drank very little; in the middle of the day he would touch absolutely nothing.

One couldn't help liking the man; his generosity was overpowering. I have seen a couple of Roman Catholic priests from Rochdale call at his office and walk off with a cheque for £5,000 to build a new church. He spent a small fortune entertaining the American troops in England and when Lord Dalziel, a director of some of his companies, mentioned that the Prime Minister would like to recommend him for a knighthood, White replied that all he wanted by way of reward was Treasury permission to bring out a public issue of Dunlops—such things then being prohibited.

At the Sport of Kings he was a law unto himself. He bought Foxhill, the big racing establishment in Wiltshire where W. T. Robinson, of Winkfield's Pride, Merman and Craganour fame, had trained for many years. Here he installed Harry Cottrill to take charge of the horses with which he meant to make Turf history. Foxhill became the de luxe establishment of all England in double-quick time. White spent on it altogether £100,000 and frequently stayed there at week-ends. These were lively times for the unfortunate trainer!

He acquired, through Cottrill, that smashing animal, Irish Elegance. Anything from Erin's Isle appealed to him. The price was 9,000 guineas; White got back most of the purchase price at one bound by laying £12,000 to £8,000 on the horse winning the July Cup at Newmarket—which he duly did.

The following year Irish Elegance, carrying an unpre-

cedented weight, was strongly fancied to win the Royal Hunt Cup. White deemed it no more than his due, as the owner of the meeting's star performer, that he should have tickets to the Royal Enclosure. He wrote Viscount Churchill to that effect, only to be informed, with the customary courtesy always displayed in these matters, that it couldn't be done. He induced influential friends in the political world to try and change the decision, without avail. I chanced to be in his office when the final "No" came through. He yelled, through the telephone, that if his horse was good enough for Ascot, he was, and if he couldn't go into the Royal Enclosure, Irish Elegance would be scratched.

The unfortunate trainer heard the dire news; he, too, rang up, begging and praying White not to make such a fool of himself. Everybody who came into the office heard that Irish Elegance was a non-starter for the Royal Hunt Cup. Later that evening, however, under the soothing influence of a bottle of champagne and also that of some friends who told him not to be such a rotten sportsman, he gave way. Irish Elegance duly appeared in the field and won the race comfortably. But White didn't see his pale blue and khaki hoops carried victoriously home; he stayed sulking in his office, contenting himself with reading the result off the "tape".

Everything about him had to be on the grand scale. As the Lord of Foxhill, his stud farm must be the greatest in England, a project in which many philanthropic friends nobly assisted him. They sold him brood mares worth a few pounds for two or three thousand guineas; he meant to breed the winner of the Derby every year. He would go down of a week-end and inquire from the estate manager: "How many sheep have we got on our land?"

"About three hundred and fifty, sir."

"Make it a couple of thousand. I'm signing a contract with the Savoy Hotel to keep them in lamb and mutton all the year round. How many turkeys are there?"

"A couple of hundred, sir."

"Make it five hundred. How many chickens do we own?"

"Six or seven hundred, sir."

"Make it a million. I'm going to be the biggest poultry dealer in London."

There was also a pig farm, the prize specimen being a gift from his old master Hooley. According to what White had been told, it was worth £5,000. Everybody had to admire it, though later on it transpired that a full brother to this priceless animal had been sold to an Essex publican for £10.

The inevitable yacht made its appearance—£30,000 worth. White set off on a cruise to the green land of Erin with a select party of friends, but while proceeding up the Irish Channel ordered his captain to drop him at Liverpool. Expostulated with for not enjoying a well-earned holiday, he shouted out: "If I don't get back to London in twenty-four hours, I'm going to lose a million pounds."

A big deal in Mexican Eagles had suddenly occurred to him. He was put ashore and the merrymakers continued on their way.

T. P. O'Connor, in company with Lord Dalziel, called upon White to ask whether he couldn't do something to help his native land along the road to a little prosperity. Mr. Joseph Devlin, the redoubtable and irrepressible "Joe", also made one of the party.

"Yes, I can," said White. "Get me a concession to run a few casinos in the South. I'll make Ireland a second Riviera."

At the end of the Great War he put forward an offer to the government to buy all the unwanted war material. His offer was £20,000,000; he would float a company for £30,000,000 and the shareholders would realize altogether £50,000,000. Fortunately for the taxpayers of England, the Disposals Board did much better. Its handling of this little problem produced £120,000,000.

This enigmatical figure of finance had little or no domestic life. Short of going down to Foxhill with some chosen friends, home to him meant little more than a place where you slept at night. He was one of those men who couldn't bear to be alone. Books were an unknown quantity to him; I doubt whether he ever read one, except, perhaps, the Racing Calendar. Despite all the millions he handled, his knowledge of foreign politics was nil. One of his parliamentary friends endeavoured one day to tell him that the

bone of contention between France and Germany had always been Alsace-Lorraine. White's master mind soon solved that little difficulty.

"Go down and tell Lloyd George," he said, "that I'll float a company to buy the place from the French and give it back to Germany, even if it costs a hundred millions."

Still, these were just idle moments. When real business was in the air, he was as hard as iron, up to every move in the game, and completely ruthless. From Lord Cowdray he bought a huge parcel of Mexican Eagle oil shares, which the owner discovered all too late were worth treble the price. His lordship vainly attempted to cancel the deal, but White made him deliver. Then came an effort to corner the diamond market by buying up the De Beers deferred shares. I was in his office one day when Solly Joel warned him to take heed how he tackled the job.

"That's all right, Solly," he said easily. "I'm watching the market like a cat."

Lord Dewar, the whisky millionaire—a warm friend of Dalziel's—introduced him to the Soap King, Lord Leverhulme, with the words: "If you sell him anything, Jimmy, you'll be the cleverest man in all England."

"You watch me," retorted White. He soon discovered that the somewhat hard-of-hearing Sunlight Soap peer wouldn't look at stocks and shares. What he did ascertain was that the Lever Company were in need of a headquarters worthy of their immense business. White proposed the De Keyser Hotel site on the embankment; it had been in the market for some time at £500,000. Lord Leverhulme's price was £350,000; he would pay the wizard a commission of 10 per cent if he could obtain the property at that figure.

White did six months' bargaining to buy De Keyser's at £360,000, received a cheque for £36,000 commission and told the sceptical Leverhulme it represented the hardest work he had ever done in his life.

In 1920 he set out to break the Ring with the greatest "double" the Turf has ever known—Bracket for the Cesarewitch, Square Measure for the Cambridgeshire. He stood to win £300,000 if these two animals did as anticipated. Bracket duly obliged and White picked up a preliminary stake of £82,000. But before the Cambridgeshire could

be run, a serious coal strike paralysed all railway services. The Cambridgeshire meeting was cancelled and the great "double", one of the biggest certainties in the history of the Turf, failed to materialize.

His jockey asked him if he would not come to Newmarket to see the horse Bracket win the Cesarcwitch.

"No," he said crisply. "If you win, you win. It'll be time enough to know what has happened over the 'tape'."

Although he could juggle in millions on paper—figures meant nothing to him—he couldn't bear the nervous strain of watching a race on which he had a big gamble. I discovered this one day at Hurst Park. Wagering £5,000 on his filly Pharmacie in a five-furlong race, dead against the advice of his trainer, he saw her lose, in a palpitating finish, by a short head. We were on the stands together watching the struggle; White had gone deathly pale as the horses neared the winning post and the moments that elapsed before the winner's number slowly went into the frame must have been like dying a thousand deaths.

When Captain Cuttle won the Derby in 1922, a result for which White was considerably responsible—he had allowed his jockey to ride the winner instead of his own horse—he stood to make £30,000. He wouldn't go to the meeting, so nervous was he. As the time for the race drew near, he walked into his back office and on the "ticker" saw Captain Cuttle come up as the winner.

"Had a good race?" inquired his staff solicitor.

"Yes, thirty-thousand quid. You won anything?"

"I have," said the man of law. "I had ten bob each way."

Noughts to James White *were* naught; he could sign a cheque for £3,500,000, as I have known him do, without realizing what it all meant.

From 1921, as I have pointed out, his star gradually waned. Once the City heard that Dunlops had incurred losses to the staggering figure of £8,000,000 in one year, White lost the tremendous following he had on 'Change. England had been hit by a devastating slump in many over-capitalized companies which were floated on their war profits. As far as White was concerned, he had to resign the control of the big tyre company, even if outwardly he gave little sign of any concern.

Theatrical management captured the passing fancy of this most unmethodical millionaire. Daly's in Leicester Square came into the market and White, on the advice of a racing friend, bought it for £230,000. No one knew, except his solicitor and the Westminster Bank, that he raised the money there and then on mortgage; that interesting fact remained hidden until after his death.

Robert Evett, famous for many years as the producer of many great plays, had his position at Daly's confirmed and his salary raised to £5,000 a year. He did not remain long; the new owner wanted to take an active part in the management and Evett, on the old principle that there can't be two masters in one house, walked out.

It didn't worry the whimsical White. He became his own producer, engaged a cast that appealed to him, and supervised everything himself. Carl Brisson, George Graves, Evelyn Laye, Phyllis Dare and many another well-known player all listened dutifully to his ideas on the drama.

Still, all this time he was but delaying the inevitable. He had vast claims to meet in the way of taxes and many of the old friends who had stood by him in the past had now begun to drift away. There was a bitter quarrel with S. B. Joel over the trifling matter of an unkept appointment; White arrived a couple of hours late and on being expostulated with, uttered words about Mr. Joel's faith which came strange from one who had received untold benefits from the Jews.

But so long as he could keep his racing stable going, nothing seemed of much consequence. Provided he maintained his credit with the bookmakers, a heavy gamble staved off the more importunate of his creditors. His trainer, Cottrill, had left Foxhill to start a stable of his own, worn out by an owner to whom racehorses were just betting machines. In his place there were installed Martin Hartigan and the once-omnipotent Jack Fallon, the man who had made Druid's Lodge a name to conjure with a few years previously. Gordon Richards arrived as an apprentice jockey and won his first race on Gay Lord, a horse of White's.

White's idea of racing consisted of having £5,000 on one of his animals just at the "off". Good sport while it lasted!

The time came when the slump seemed to have subsided. He returned to the offices of 218 Strand, temporarily deserted while he was in the throes of theatrical production, to start dabbling in oil companies and real estate. Drapers' shops also attracted his attention, in the form of making offers for any big business that might be floated. However, the proprietors of these concerns were also being courted to the same end by Clarence Hatry and though White made a little money, the public weren't biting in a way that allowed any of the fantastic profits made in the past.

There came into that teeming brain of his the idea of buying up the British Celanese Company, in conjunction with the persuasive Canadian financier, Colonel Grant Morden. Silk stockings were going to be a big thing in the future, as indeed they proved. But the Dreyfus family had real money to buy the concern; White and Morden had not.

News reached him that Venezuela fairly ran with oil. A business known as British Controlled Oilfields, which had languished for some years, might be acquired through the medium of its 4,500,000 preferred shares. He and a few confiding associates began picking them up as they came on the market, until they ran foul of another sultry specimen of the Canadian financier in the shape of Sir Edward Mackay Edgar, a gentleman who had wreaked havoc with the affairs of certain British banking and shipbuilding companies and had received a baronetcy.

It was an obsession of White's, this British Controlled. He thought that through various brokers he would buy up far more shares than Edgar and his friends could deliver. He went on for more than two years doing this, putting everything he possessed, and the money of many little investors who knew no better, into preparation for the one final smash that would place British Controlled in his hands.

Greater insanity was never shown by any financier. The oil wells owned by the Company held out no promise whatever of immediate richness. But White, despite the perfectly authentic reports he received to this effect and repeated warnings from Edgar that disaster awaited him, continued the fight until the summer of 1927, when everything was ready for the grand coup. He had "calls" on shares to the tune of £750,000, without the slightest possibility

of finding the money. Frantic appeals to wealthy friends of other days proved utterly unavailing. All he could rake up were comparatively small sums from people who did not properly understand what he was doing. He already owed the Westminster Bank a matter of £450,000 and could get no further backing there.

In desperation, he appealed to the enemy, Sir Edward Mackay Edgar, ("Mike" to his intimates). That astute individual declined to listen to White's reason, saying with every justification: "How do you expect *me* to find the money to pay for all these shares? You bought them, not me. *You* were going to call for the shares that didn't exist and force them up to any price you liked. I should have been the one that was ruined, not *you*."

White departed, after a stormy six hours' pleading the result of which meant the end of all things for him. His affairs were now in a hopeless tangle. He had the gigantic commitments of British Controlled to meet, added to other heavy obligations which had been postponed to see whether the latest gamble would save him. Almost up to the last he was hoping that one or two millionaire friends would come to his aid.

Nothing transpired; when the last chance of salvation had disappeared, he resolved to make his exit from the world sooner than face the disgrace that lay before him. He drove down to his beloved Foxhill, gave orders that he should not be disturbed, and after writing a number of farewell letters, took a heavy dose of prussic acid.

There has never been a greater sensation in England than the death of this immensely popular financier. Whatever his faults, he was hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, without a real enemy. True it is that many of the people who had made immense sums out of his brains conspicuously offered none of the innumerable tributes that were paid to his memory. They, of course, had vanished with their profits earlier on, and they did not bother to come forward when White was laid to his rest, close to Foxhill.

He was buried in the little cemetery at Wanborough, after as strange a career as any man has ever known. He had been the friend of royalty, the patron of the poor. From the direst

depths of poverty he had risen to the topmost pinnacle of fabulous wealth, never for one day losing that inherent good-fellowship which had always endeared him to everyone.

Just before his death he wrote the letters which described the feelings that possessed him in his final despair; they revealed, all too well, that fair-play to his friends and uncalled-for generosity had been thrown away in the heyday of his power.

CHAPTER XII

MILLIONAIRE MYSTERIES

MORALISTS, as well as journalists who know what they are talking about, cannot but find food for deep thought about the opportunities that await get-rich-quick financiers in England.

I speak in this matter from a good deal of personal experience, having known most of the men whose exploits kept them in the headlines for many years. Nearly all of them have finished up penniless, some in dire disgrace, others fading unobtrusively from the glittering scene which had been their background for a number of years.

Suicide, again, has claimed many of them; it is easy to visualize a man accustomed to the handling of millions despairingly saying to himself that death is preferable to dishonour and the scorn of his fellow-beings. Such a fatalist was Whitaker Wright, one of the pioneers of West Australian gold mines who, from being a millionaire with a palace to live in, ended by fleeing the country with a few hundred pounds and a woman who stood by him to the last. Heaven only knows that his ultimate downfall was tragic enough, being brought back a prisoner from the United States and terminating his own life after being sentenced to a long term of penal servitude.

The financier who runs away never lives to fight another day; he stands condemned. Gerard Lee Bevan might have suffered no worse punishment than the Bankruptcy Court if he had stood his ground. That fact was admitted by Sir Richard Muir, who prosecuted him at the Old Bailey. The four months that Bevan remained hidden on the Continent,

leaving all his papers behind him in London, enabled the Treasury to build up the case against him at leisure.

Samuel Insull, the London-born American financier who controlled public utility undertakings in the United States amounting to £200,000,000, provided another pathetic example of the financier who over-reaches himself. I interviewed poor old Insull when, before proceedings in America were actually commenced against him, he came to London, the city of his birth, asking himself, no doubt, why he had ever left it. He was then about seventy years of age, plump, stocky, with old-fashioned side-whiskers and you wondered in talking to him how such an unimpressive individual had ever achieved such power in a land like America. He had his little old wife with him, equally pitiful.

He need never have fled and have experienced all the agony of mind that must have possessed him as he travelled in disguise from one country to another, eluding the extradition warrant that had now been granted to the Chicago police. When he finally took refuge in Greece, one of the few countries in Europe which had no extradition treaty with America, he congratulated himself that his troubles were over. He would settle down there, he and his trembling wife, to some sort of new life in which his undoubted talents could be used.

However, he was too badly wanted by the Federal Government, as well as in Chicago, for the niceties of international law to be strictly observed. Strong pressure by the State Department caused the Greek Minister of the Interior to refuse to prolong his *permit de séjour*. Insull had to leave Greece and went to Constantinople where the Turks arrested him and sent him to Smyrna to be handed over to Mr. B. Y. Berry, an American third secretary of embassy. Shortly afterwards Insull was conducted by Mr. Berry and Captain Habel to the United States in the *S.S. Exilona* to stand his trial. To the amazement of everybody, and to nobody more than himself, he received an acquittal on the numerous charges he had to face. Why this occurred can be simply stated; he had not benefited personally from any of the manipulated balance sheets that brought him to ruin. Under English law he would have stood no chance whatever.

We had a somewhat similar case in England, that of Lord Kylsant, the chairman of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co., one of our principal steamship lines trading to South America. Here, again, were instances of assets being transferred from one Company's balance sheets to another. Lord Kylsant, a tall, dignified figure of a man, who had held numerous high public offices, was admitted to have reaped no personal gain. He was pathos personified as he stood in the dock, and the light sentence of twelve months' imprisonment that he received—an extremely merciful one under our penal code—was due to the fact that he had acted from honourable motives, and also that the greatest punishment of all lay in the loss of everything that made life worth while—his good name, his commercial position and, perhaps the most, his standing in society.

Quite a number of these shipping magnates came crashing down shortly after the Great War. The clever ones, such as the late Sir John Ellerman and the late Lord Glanely, sold out at the height of the tremendous boom in tonnage which began in 1919, and thereby supplemented the big profits they had made during the war itself. Every nation on earth was scrambling for ships; we and the United States were the only two countries that could meet the demand. Later on, when the inevitable slump took place, Ellerman and Glanely bought the ships back for nothing and eventually made another fortune. Ellerman was estimated to have made £10,000,000 out of these deals.

Horatio Bottomley may be cited as a glaring specimen of the clever crook who flourishes on the credulity of human nature. As far back as the early 'nineties he appeared in the Courts over the Hansard Union frauds, to conduct his defence with such agility that the Treasury gave him up in disgust. Then he ran into some real money in the West Australian gold mining boom, posed as a millionaire and spent money like water, but before many years were out, found his way into Carey Street. There, to all intents and purposes, he cast anchor. Up to the time of his death in 1933 he was rarely free of his creditors, though to be sure he never allowed this fact to mar his enjoyment of life. He went on for thirty years, sitting on a barrel of gunpowder all the time, as he candidly confessed to his friends, until the long arm of the

law finally encompassed him in 1922 and put him in penal servitude for seven years.

His life story should intrigue the interest of our novelists. Here was a man born in the East End of London who spent his boyhood days in an orphanage and rose, through nobody's efforts but his own, to be the public voice of our man in the street. His arch-enemy, the City solicitor, Edward Bell, once said that a man can talk his way through the world, if he changes the environment often enough. There never was such a persuasive talker as Bottomley, even if his tongue was in his cheek all the time. Vanity, venality and vindictiveness were his three outstanding faults. He had considerable literary gifts, a keen perception of what the masses wanted, and the most extraordinary moral courage. What he enjoyed more than anything was a day in the Courts bearding the legal lions in their dens.

Yet he had no personal appearance to help him along. Short, and always inclined to corpulency, even from early manhood, he walked a trifle pigeon-toed and even waddled. But when you looked at that broad forehead and determined mouth, you quickly realized he was no man to trifle with. He, like Hooley and White, had no fondness for the arduous labour involved in the building-up of big businesses; for him, it had to be the quick "touch" and away. Hence it was that he took the easiest way to wealth, that of exploiting the people whose interests he pretended to watch.

Without a doubt he was an arrant old humbug, the greatest one we have ever known. The last time I saw him was at a West-End theatre, relating on the boards a few poor stories of the days gone by. All the old fire had gone; he was just that pitiable sight, a hero unmasked. In the course of that wasted life of his he had frittered away the better part of £5,000,000. Lawyers, moneylenders, racehorses, theatres, all had taken their quota.

When he came out of gaol in 1927 he received £12,000 for his reminiscences, a sum of money that might have evoked some spark of gratitude in his wayward heart. Not a bit of it; all he wrote was to complain bitterly of the gross injustice that had been meted out to him. Then he began a vendetta against various people who, after being ruined by him, had omitted to behave themselves according to his

lights. And so he died, friendless and penniless, a sad ending to a career that might have been crowned with great honours.

No country but England could have produced such a man; no other people but the English would have tolerated him so long. Verily did he talk *bis* way through the world.

How many more of these men have come to a similar end? Sir Edward Mackay Edgar died with nothing, in a small suburban villa, suffering before he did so the ignominy of seeing a claim brought by his trustee in bankruptcy against one of his women friends for the return of some valuable jewellery he had given her. Edgar had possessed yachts, racehorses, town houses, a title, everything, indeed, that a man is supposed to want. For all the good they did him, he might just as well have stayed in the stockbrokers' office in Montreal whence he came.

His friend Grant Morden passed away blind and penniless, with hardly a friend to visit him in the unhappy days that came towards the end. But neither of these two men, Canadians both of them, understood the art of popularizing themselves as did Hooley, White and Bottomley. The latter I would class as the outstanding showman of them all, though his abilities in this direction lay more with the lower classes. Hooley and White could wheedle big money out of men who had already amassed fortunes and were greedy for more. One could describe it as nothing more than a game of catch-as-catch-can and the devil take the hindmost.

But the evil that men do lives after them; many and many a case have I known of fine businesses and wealthy families utterly ruined by these fascinating financiers. Rarely are these tragedies ever revealed to the world; it is only now and again that one gets a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes.

One of life's eternal mysteries is the man who goes on amassing untold wealth without the slightest possibility of extracting any physical enjoyment from it. In the course of my journalistic jaundlings I have encountered dozens of millionaires; only now and again did I find one to whom good food and wine meant anything at all. In fact, with most of them their health had reached the stage of living on

a Spartan diet, no red meat, no intoxicating liquors and no smoking. Half their sustenance came out of a medicine bottle.

It's an old saying, and perfectly true, that a man can only eat three meals a day and sleep in one bed of a night. So you are inclined to ask yourself: "What is the reason that keeps these millionaires accumulating money for which they have no earthly use?"

John D. Rockefeller was a classic example of such foolishness. He lived until close on a hundred, an emaciated skeleton of humanity who had made hundreds of millions of pounds out of the Standard Oil Trust, and in the process thereof became the most execrated man in America.

Andrew Carnegie piled up well over a hundred millions with his great Steel Combine and then vainly tried to give his riches away in the form of free libraries which nobody wanted.

Let me quote the case of the Crœsus I have already mentioned in this book—Sir Joseph Benjamin Robinson, known to all and sundry in South Africa as the Old Buccaneer. In the year 1911 he thought fit to sue for libel, over a passage in a book entitled *Reminiscences of Kimberley*, the Louis Cohen I have referred to in connection with R. S. Sievier. Cohen in this book alleged that Sir Joseph Robinson, in his early days in Kimberley, was in the habit of defrauding the people with whom he traded. Three of the most expensive counsel in England, Sir Edward Carson, Mr. H. E. Duke (afterwards Lord Merrivale) and Mr. Henry McCardie were briefed to defeat Cohen and duly succeeded, after the plaintiff had proved to the world that he was a person of the most impeccable character.

Subsequently there were also criminal proceedings against Cohen. He was charged with suborning one of the witnesses in the affair to commit perjury and eventually went to penal servitude for three years. But mark what happened later on!

In 1922 there appeared in the *London Gazette* a notification that the King had been pleased to confer on Sir Joseph Robinson a barony of the United Kingdom for national and Imperial services. Within a few days in the House of Lords five peers arose, one after the other, to ask of the government how it had come about that this man, of

whom no one in South Africa, white or black, had a good word to say, deserved such an honour. Three former Governors-General of the Union roundly condemned him as someone who had never done a good deed in his life and, as Lord Selborne pointedly remarked, Sir Joseph Robinson had never given him the slightest assistance in dealing with the difficulties of the Africander question which existed at the time of his Governorship.

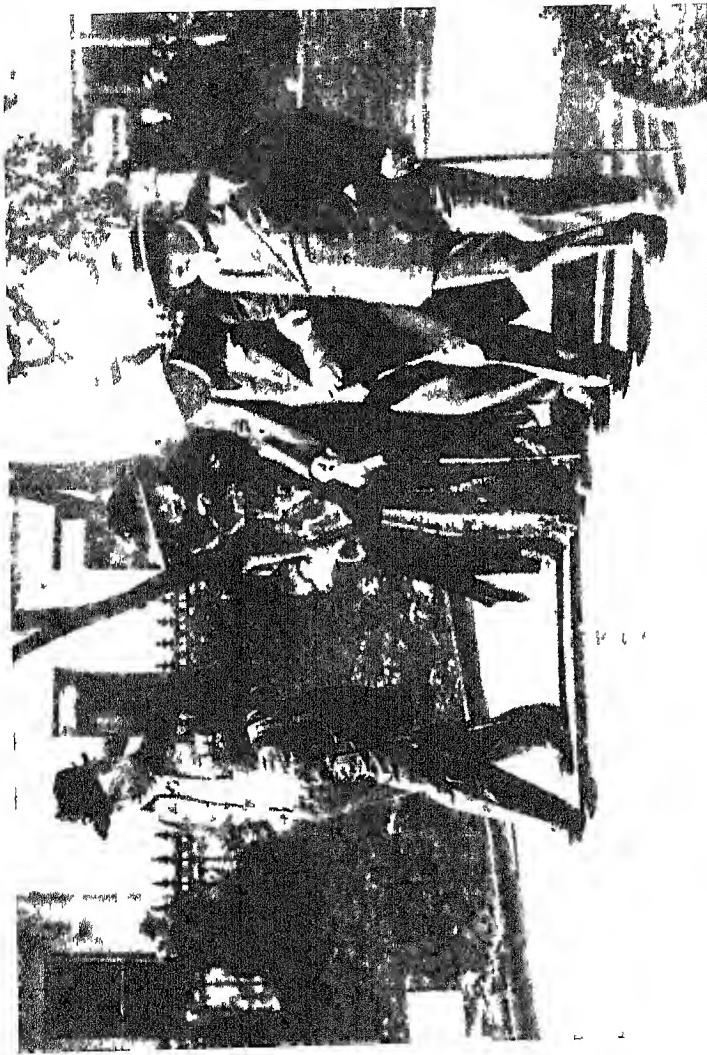
The re-action to this unprecedented attack was sensational. Sir Joseph Robinson wrote to the Prime Minister saying he had read with surprise the debate in the Lords; he had not sought the suggested honour and whilst deeply appreciating it, he would, under the circumstances, respectfully beg that his name be withdrawn.

The Old Buccaneer had bought himself a country mansion to settle down in England for the remainder of his days. But after the damaging exposé in the Painted Chamber, he sold up everything he possessed here and returned to South Africa, a pathetic, doddering old man who had known only one master all his life—*Mammon*.

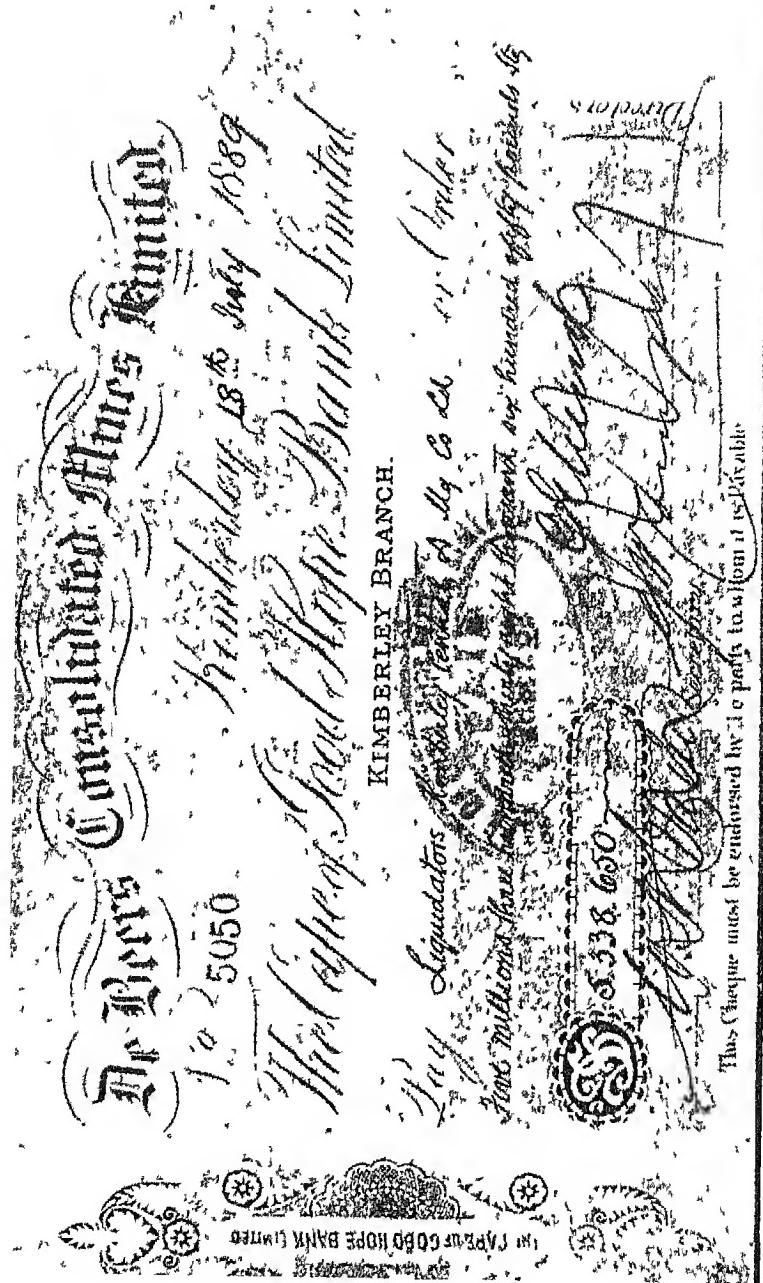
What, it may be asked, is the urge that compels these men to hoard and haggle all their lives, remaining indifferent to the contempt of their fellow-beings? Howard Spring wrote a novel which summed it up pretty accurately, fame is the spur. They love the sense of power that money brings, the admiration and obsequiousness of everybody around them and the feeling that they are the masters of so many people's fate.

Yet these money-grubbers rarely condescend to take part in the counsels of the country from which they have derived their wealth. Take a glance back over the innumerable millionaires we have known in England and ask how many of them have ever graced the House of Commons, or the Lords, either, if it comes to that. Ponder the awful example of Sir Robert Houston, the Liverpool shipping magnate, who domiciled himself in the Channel Islands to escape the death duties on his £7,000,000 fortune. His widow, it is true, paid the Chancellor of the Exchequer the sum of £1,500,000 as an “act of grace”, but only after Mr. Neville Chamberlain had threatened to introduce retrospective legislation.

Again, just how many of these Midases have left any



Sir Joseph Robinson
(In white helmet)



Barney Barnato's cheque for his Kimberley diamond mines

appreciable part of their money to the men who helped make it for them? Mercy forbids that one should name a few of those who have not; their number in this country is legion. I knew one of them in the newspaper world who left £5,000,000; and beyond a bequest of £25,000 to the man who had been his Managing Editor, he gave not a single penny to anyone else in his employ.

You come across strange stories of the unhappy fate that overtakes so many millionaires' families, of daughters who run away with adventurers, of sons who, deprived of an allowance that they consider suitable, forge their fathers' names, and finish up eventually by being thrown out with nothing.

I knew a girl who ran away with a good-looking young chap and married him, dead against her millionaire parent's wishes. There would be no dowry coming to her, but she didn't mind. When she flew from the family nest, she took with her a diamond necklace worth £50,000 belonging to papa. It went straightaway into pawn for £25,000 and, to show there was no animosity, she sent her father the ticket.

You find many a millionaire leaving all he possesses to charities and not because he is desirous of doing something for, as well as to, humanity. It is done simply out of spite; he has quarrelled with all his family and disgusted most of his friends, until at the finish there is not a soul in the world who feels the least affection for him.

Most of the men who pile up huge fortunes gradually lose the more human side of their nature. All their actions are regulated by terms of £ s. d. Their bank-book is their Bible, their estimate of everything and everybody they encounter is "What is it, or he, worth to me?"

What, for instance, could you make of that notorious old skinflint, the Marquess of Clanricarde, the absentee landlord *in excelsis*, whose Irish properties were worth some £4,000,000? He existed, not lived, in The Albany for many years in circumstances that suggested he was always on the verge of the workhouse. I frequently saw this ancient curmudgeon wandering along Pall Mall; he would go into his club, call for half a pint of bitter, and then calmly pull a packet of sandwiches from his pocket. And no one dared say him nay!

Let me remark, apropos this aspect of money, that most of our Jewish millionaires are an object lesson to their Christian competitors in the distribution of their wealth. No one could ever accuse the Rothschilds of not being generosity personified. I once wrote an interesting story about them, and from a man who had been thirty-five years in their employ I heard many intriguing instances of their kindness to people in distress—notably in the case of the late Richard Marsh, the King's trainer.

That notable trio of the famous family who reigned so long at New Court, "Natty", Leopold and Alfred, must have given away hundreds of thousand of pounds in the course of their lives. And they did it unostentatiously; their good nature never came to light unless the recipient himself disclosed it. It would be betraying no secret to say that they are nothing like the immensely-rich firm of days gone by; much of the Rothschild wealth originated in the handling of big State loans, a class of business that has now passed away except in the case of South American governments.

The richest man in Great Britain is, in all probability, the Duke of Westminster. His Mayfair annual rent-roll must be colossal, and ever increasing, now that so many of the former mansions of the nobility are changing over to commerce. It will be but a matter of a few years before all those streets which lie between Piccadilly in the south and Oxford Street in the north, and bounded east and west by Bond Street and Park Lane respectively, are given over to huge blocks of flats and business houses. So the landlords, and especially His Grace of Westminster, will be in clover. But "Bend Or" is a fine freeholder; his interest in money is slight. He does not court public popularity; in fact, he hides himself from society functions, blossoming forth but occasionally with a house party at Eaton Hall in Cheshire.

You come across these millionaire peer landlords in many parts of London. The Duke of Norfolk has great possessions off the Strand, as denoted by Arundel Street, Effingham Street, Howard Street and other thoroughfares bearing the family names. North of Oxford Street, the intellectual Lord Howard de Walden holds sway with numerous valuable freeholds. Further west, the Portman family owns

much lucrative property, while down towards Knightsbridge the Cadogan family are prominent.

Per contra, there is the reverse side of the picture—freeholds around Eaton and Chester squares, no longer so precious as they once were. The time will soon come when all the old-fashioned mansions which were built in Georgian times in these squares will cease to exist; the nobility who could once afford to live in them are gradually being eliminated by heavy death duties and income tax, which cut their revenues down to vanishing point. The Londoner of the future will be a flat-dweller, possibly with a *pied-à-terre* in the country for a breath of fresh air. Domestic service is fast becoming a thing of the past, for the modern miss is an independent creature, eager to find employment in office or shop, but not as a household drudge. You can't blame them; a look into the servants' quarters of the out-of-date residences you see in what were once the haunts of the élite, quickly convinces you that a social revolution is well on the way in this country.

But that applies as well to all factory work. Employers generally are fast awakening to the truth that good conditions produce good results. In the not-distant future London may be cleared of its vast industrial, and consequent slum, areas. Manufacturers will probably be compelled to move out into the country and to build garden cities where their employees can exist under decent conditions. And as the present war has conclusively proved, the immense concentration of industry in the big cities can be a source of the gravest national danger.

Journalists who are frequently in and out of the Law Courts witness many sights of a distressing nature and none more poignant than that of solicitors who are called upon to appear before a Judge of the High Court to show cause why they should not be struck off the Roll.

Preliminarily, of course, they have the option of pleading their case before the Disciplinary Committee of the Law Society, at what is known as the Little Green House, a building in Carey Street where complaints against members of the legal profession are investigated.

The late Lord Terrington was a sad example of a pros-

perous and respected solicitor who ruined himself through listening to the wiles of one of those fly-by-night financiers I have mentioned in the course of this book. These crooks—they are nothing else—frequently employ a lawyer whom they know to possess wealthy clients, on the off-chance of getting an opportunity to interest such people in their schemes.

Lord Terrington fell into one of these cleverly-laid traps and with the prospect of making a fortune through the medium of certain company promotions, he embezzled the better part of £500,000 belonging to Sir Harold Reckitt, of "Blue" fame. When discovery came, following the downfall of the specious financier, he fled to France and remained hidden for twelve months until his family and friends induced him to surrender himself.

He came back voluntarily, stood his trial, went to penal servitude for four years and died shortly after being released.

Even sadder was the disgrace of that celebrated solicitor, George Marshall, a man who numbered amongst his clients some of the wealthiest noblemen in England. He practised at Retford, in Nottinghamshire, and in the course of a long and honourable career he had been five times mayor of his native town.

Then, one fell day, he accepted some lucrative conveyancing business from a get-rich-quick financier with a highly persuasive personality, who talked him into investing his own savings, and subsequently considerable funds belonging to his clients, in enticing propositions which would speedily make a fortune.

Alas, they did nothing of the sort. The time came when Marshall, the man of the copybook career, fled with a few thousand pounds belonging to the Duke of Newcastle, to be arrested in London and brought back to Retford, where he underwent the humiliation of having to appear in the identical court where he had sat for so many years as a justice of the peace. He, too, went to penal servitude for five years, while the financier responsible for his fall escaped scot free.

He came out of prison a lonely, broken man, lingered on a few years longer and then quietly faded away, he who was once the leading lawyer in what we call the Dukeries.

Another of England's eternal mysteries is the bucket-shop keeper—the gentleman who peddles worthless shares. He is a hardy breed, with a history that dates back to the Naughty Nineties when gold-mines and bicycles were vastly in favour with the gambling public. However, these share-swindlers don't omit to move with the times; if it be gramophones, radio sets and motor cars that are flourishing industries, they will produce a company or two whose shares will surely be a money-spinner.

What they do is distressingly simple. To keep within the law, they go to a company promoter and say to him:

"Bill, how many so-and-so have you got left?" naming some low-priced share of which perhaps half a million have been registered.

"I've got a couple of hundred thousand."

"I'll bid you £5,000 for the lot."

"Done," says Bill sharply. "Let's have the money, quick."

These 200,000 shares will go into a carefully-prepared list that the bucket-shop baron has in mind. They and a few more "duds", will be included in a sheet of weekly offerings for the "mug punters" whose names and addresses are taken from the stock and share registers at Somerset House.

But not entirely, mark you; to lend verisimilitude to the ramp, there are also included a few genuine shares—only a few—at ordinary market prices, and even some gilt-edge securities. You may write in for some of the last two kinds, only to be informed: "Sorry, all gone; but we can recommend United Tricycles Ordinary, a sound speculation at three-and-sixpence."

The king of all these "outside" brokers was a man who sent out a million circulars a week! For quite a long time he conducted a perfectly genuine business, until, he, too, got caught with so many swindles that he ruined himself.

What the bucket-shop brigand looks for is the poor simpleton with a few thousand pounds and a profound ignorance of the world. Country clergymen, retired Army and Navy officers, elderly women, are all food for his pigeon pie. He will get you gambling on margins, with perhaps £100 cover. You will be informed that he has bought American Steel, or some such commodity, on your behalf; it will probably rise four or five points in a week.

Pray do not write and ask your "broker", if such be the case, why he does not speculate in these American Steels and take himself the profit that he is entitled to for his excellent information! That would cut him to the quick; he will probably write you a pained letter saying that he is merely trying to make money for you. Do not repudiate the losses you have incurred; that would bring you a nasty letter from the solicitors who have an office next door.

All the big prizes in the bucket-shop stakes must be awarded to that notorious gang originated by Jacob Factor. He and Messrs. Spiro, Tanfield & Company—there were hundreds in it—have swindled the British public of many millions of pounds. The tactics here were nothing elaborate; they merely purchased two or three reputable old stock-brokering firms, took over their clientele, and rooked them right and left with shares not only worthless, but in many cases completely fictitious.

Factor himself escaped to America, and all our efforts to have him extradited proved as abortive as they were expensive. He had no British nationality; he carried one of those Geneva passports issued to people rendered homeless after the Great War. In Chicago, on application from the City Police, he was arrested and held for a long time; but he knew the ropes too well and had too much money at his disposal.

Nearly all his subordinates subsequently found their way to prison. One could write a book on their exploits, if only as a warning to the unwary. Doubtless it would be merely a waste of time. A new generation of "suckers" will arise to whom the name of Jacob Factor will mean nothing.

I saw one day at the Law Courts—in the Crypt Bar, to be exact—an ex-millionaire who had an intriguing little story behind him. Years ago, in the great West Australian boom, he ran into an immense fortune. The usual yacht made its appearance and X, as I shall call him, made the acquaintance of everybody, from royalty downwards. He was an extremely handsome fellow with charming manners, popular everywhere.

However, Nemesis also overtook him and he got involved in an ugly scandal. He disappeared from all the old haunts

and remained unheard of until a day when Scotland Yard received information from the Paris *Surété* that the Grand Duchess Xenia, a sister of the late Czar of Russia, had parted with £20,000 worth of jewellery to an American crook calling himself Maurice Sternbach.

That gentleman, in his turn, implicated X, who was supposed to have invested the proceeds of the jewels in a photographic process which would make £50,000 a year.

Nothing ever happened to these two gentlemen. The American was caught red-handed stealing a set of gold-mounted brushes from a Strand hotel and merely deported. The other just vanished; it was fifteen years afterwards that I saw him in the Law Courts. Nobody else knew him. I asked him about one of his old friends; all he did was to say "I don't know" and then hurriedly walk away. How had the mighty fallen!

CHAPTER XIII

DEVIL'S ISLAND AND THE WORST WOMAN IN THE WORLD

IT takes all sorts to make a world, especially the world in which the poor journalist lives. One day he may be discussing high politics with a Cabinet Minister; within twenty-four hours he may be devoting his mighty intellect to the exploits of some notorious crook.

Mind you, I don't allege that this is the invariable fate of the Fourth Estate these days. Nearly all the reporting staff of the big newspapers are now specialists; politics, society, crime, industrial affairs, are all covered by men who do nothing else. Jack of all trades and master of none applies just as much in Fleet Street as anywhere else.

My particular forte was the supply of "circulation raisers", the outstanding "splashes", as we term these big stories. Sometimes I succeeded in putting a real winner across, and though I acknowledge it with shame, the best story I ever sold one of my long-suffering Editors was that of a notorious international crook, Eddie Guerin, the man who escaped from Devil's Island.

I had transferred my headquarters to what I thought were

most comfortable chambers in Garrick Street and if I live to be a hundred I shall never forget my first week there. The Westminster City Council celebrated my arrival with an electric drill which rendered life utterly purgatorial after the cloistered calm of Clifford's Inn.

However, there I was, with a lease on my hands and a high-class American gangster to keep me company for a few weeks.

My readers may like to know the appearance and mannerisms of this once-famous desperado. In the heyday of his career he certainly hit the headlines—he and his lady-love, the immortal "Chicago May". Guerin, indeed, could almost describe himself as a pioneer of modern American gangsterism and in the course of his perfectly candid confession he presented to me, with no false modesty, a thick book used by the New York Detective Department in which he figured as one of the leading professional criminals of America. Yes, there he was, portrait and all, bank robber, "will shoot on sight".

An obliging friend in the underworld sent him along and I found myself gazing with great interest at a tall, heavily-built individual with a white, grizzled moustache. He looked quite a venerable old gentleman, clad in a good suit of clothes and carrying an umbrella—until you looked him closely in the eyes. Then you said to yourself "Beware". He had quite an easy manner with him, no American accent worth talking about, and an affable desire to please. I might also remark that I found him infinitely straighter in his dealings with me than a few other people I could mention.

I paid him a nice little sum to begin with, in brand-new Bank of England notes. He and they had been strangers to each other for quite a time. After he had scrawled a receipt for the money, he stretched a huge hand across and growled feebly: "Gawd, it's good to see some of them again."

The story of this man's progress through life verges on the incredible. Occasionally, when I sit in a cinema looking at the American gangster pictures that are now so popular, I wonder why the adventures of Eddie Guerin and "Chicago May" have never been filmed. Both these people lived luridly if you like, but nevertheless lived. They both hailed from Chicago, and even if they never attained the world-

wide notoriety of Al Capone, they certainly made history of a sort.

Guerin was actually born in London in 1860 and as a matter of slight passing interest, I might mention that four of the "notabilities and notorieties" whose careers figure in this book—E. T. Hooley, Bob Sievier, Bottomley and Guerin—all came into the world in that auspicious year. What the French would term a vintage year! Guerin's Irish father, probably of French descent, left his home in Ireland in the middle 'fifties and went to the United States where he married a widow named Fox in Chicago. In 1859 or 1860 the couple came to Europe and Eddie, as everybody called him—even Scotland Yard men—was born at Hoxton. He went to Chicago when his parents returned there in 1867. Eddie remembered nothing of his boyhood days in London, but he vividly recollects the Great Fire of Chicago in 1871, when half the city was burned to the ground. His father died soon afterwards and at twelve years of age Eddie became a bell-boy on a Great Lake steamer. In turns, always hungering for money, he was "candy butcher" on the long-distance trains, cash boy in the Marshall Field store, and telegraph boy with the Western Union. In this latter capacity he found, according to his own confession, innumerable opportunities to steal; the money went in pool-rooms. At the tender age of fifteen he was in the hands of the police.

Chicago City Prison seems to have been a sewer full of human refuse—black and white, and the justice meted out to them was apparently as brutal as it was in England. The judge awarded him nine months' imprisonment and what he underwent in the course of it makes the annals of Old Newgate read like the report of a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon. "Kill or cure" was the Chicago creed in those days.

His eighteenth birthday saw him serving two years in the Ohio Penitentiary; here he learnt the lock-step that we see on the films. He also experienced one of the first American attempts to use electricity for punishment. He worked in the rolling-mills, cigar factories and all manner of industries, let out to contractors who hired the convicts from the State at fifty cents a day. The State of Ohio liked its prisons to be self-supporting.

In the early 'eighties, after going straight for two or three years, he committed his first really big crime—robbing the Pennsylvania Railway in Pittsburg. Flush of money for the first time in his life, he made tracks for Chicago—just to show the old folks how he had made money. Walking down Main Street, he ran into a couple of "bulls".

"Hullo, Eddie," they said cheerily. "Back again?"

"Yes, it's good to see the old town again."

"You won't be seeing it long," was the reply. "Come on," slipping the handcuffs on him, "you're wanted for that robbery in Pittsburg."

Alleghany State Prison, one of the worst in America, was to be his home for the next three years. It contained six hundred murderers, burglars, horse-thieves, safe-breakers—you can see the type on the Hollywood films almost any day of the week. Eventually he escaped from gaol and got across the frontier to Toronto, where he made another effort to earn an honest living. But Toronto in those times fairly swarmed with American criminals on the run; the day came when Eddie found himself in New York with a bunch of the hottest villains in the country. That deeply-dreaded old detective, Supt. Thomas Byrnes, did him the honour of gazetting him in his Rogues' Gallery, and Eddie went on the run.

To set down any account of his adventures in the next few years would make too long reading here. Back in Chicago in 1886, very much one of the underworld's élite, he shot a policeman in an affray over a "dame", which resulted in another flight to Canada and, later on, his arrival in London with a gang of American bank robbers who had then discovered that Europe generally, if not England, was easy game for the strong-arm Yankee desperadoes who were ready to kill or be killed.

London, unfortunately for him, proved awkward. A preliminary attempt to burgle one of the big City post offices resulted in Eddie getting three months as a suspect, but nothing more. The police didn't know his American record.

However, Eddie took the hint and moved on. Paris was the real Mecca for the gangsters. Guerin joined in with the mob and took part in a spectacular robbery of the Crédit

Lyonnais at Lyons. In Paris at that time was a lady also named Lyons, Sophie of that ilk, a notorious "fence", who had been a queen of the underworld in her younger and more glamorous days. The combination of these three Lyons turned out to be fatal to Guerin. Returning to Paris, after the daring robbery which produced £10,000, he was requested to "kick-in", not only by the fascinating Sophie, but also by an elderly "runner" for the gang. But the bulk of the money was not with Guerin; it had been "planted" in a wood outside the city. In consequence of his failure to divide the booty, Guerin got a bullet-wound in the shoulder. He was smuggled over to England by accommodating friends, denounced by Sophie Lyons to Scotland Yard, and arrested after a spectacular flight over the rooftops, clad in nothing but shirt and trousers.

There was a bitter struggle in the Law Courts before he could be extradited to France, a struggle curiously enough, repeated almost to the letter twenty years afterwards when he had escaped from the Ile du Diable. But on this latter occasion, thanks to the sympathetic interest taken in his life and, possibly, also a certain admiration for any man who could defy the horrors that had been inflicted upon the unfortunate Captain Dreyfus, he found a champion in Mr. (later Sir) Richard Muir. For fourteen months, Muir fought the extradition proceedings and Guerin was freed in 1907—of which more later.

At Lyons Cour d'Assises in 1889 he received sentence of ten years' imprisonment, a term which he served, with innumerable periods of solitary confinement, in the convict penitentiary at Riom, the self-same town, strangely enough, where Daladier, Gamelin and other French notabilities were held for trial by the Vichy Government. It was 1898 before Guerin got back to London, almost unable to speak the English language. Hidden in the wood outside Lyons was a small fortune; it probably lies there to this day.

London was still a kind of headquarters for his American associates. For a year or two he hung round the West End, picking up the threads of the old life, regaining the former confidence, until there came into his life the woman who achieved more notoriety than any female criminal has ever known before or since—the one and only "Chicago May".

May Churchill, or Latimer—nobody knew her real origin, except that she had been a servant-girl and was of Irish extraction—could, without much exaggeration, boast of being the worst woman in the world. From being a high-class prostitute who specialized in what was known as the “badger trick”—a game which made her notorious with the Yard men—she had “muscled-in”, as they say to-day, with the Yankee “yeggmen”. May was getting a trifle passée for patrolling the streets. It wanted a lot of paint and peroxide to attract any decent clients; besides, the police harried her unmercifully and warned her that one fine day she would fall, good and hard.

She just laughed at them, being a lady scornful of such a fate. Guerin fell for her mature charms and in 1901, the pair of them, with two top-notch Transatlantic toughs, “Dutch Gus” Muller and Kid McManus, journeyed over to Paris to crack a crib that had been well surveyed—the office of the American Express Company in the Rue Scribe. “Chicago May”, declining to be left behind, accompanied the party without knowing what was afoot. Guerin thought she might be a good alibi, in case the French police demanded the reason of his return.

The preliminary staff work seems to have been fairly efficient. From the black caretaker of the premises, a gentleman addicted to the cafés when he should have been on duty, a wax impression of the key to the front door was obtained, and some few nights later the three gangsters slipped silently into the American Express, unseen and unheard. Guerin and McManus went upstairs to the room where the negro slept; him they gagged and bound, with a pistol at his head, while the third member of the Three Musketeers, an expert in the dynamiting of safes, blew open the heavy door that stood between them and fortune. In the early dawn, with daylight just filtering in through the windows, they sat on the floor of the main office and divided the plunder—£50,000 in cash, £12,000 in travellers’ cheques. One by one, they quietly disappeared into the morning, each to go his own way.

McManus got clear away. Muller was apprehended at the Gare du Nord rashly imagining the Surété officers to be unaware of his identity. Eddie and his inamorata—the

latter carrying the greater part of his share—also took train for England and by one of those miracles which frequently happen in crime, she escaped arrest for the time being. She had found out all about the robbery from her jubilant lover and Guerin handed over the money, thinking it not unlikely, as it did turn out, that he would be arrested.

He was not wrong. Just as the train approached Amiens, he smelt danger at the sight of men walking up and down the corridor; he left his compartment and in a trice was thrown into a carriage, handcuffed, cursing himself for the foolishness that had possessed him in trying to escape so simply. But the golden-haired May went untouched—for a time.

Guerin arrived back in Paris to discover that "Dutch Gus" had already, as he eloquently put it, "snitched". Then, to make matters worse, "Chicago May" thought fit to come over in the mistaken hope of saving him. She, too, was arrested, and after some months of confinement, the three of them appeared at the Seine Assizes, Guerin and "Dutch Gus" to remain for life in the penal settlement of Cayenne, "Chicago May" to be imprisoned in France for five years.

Now, here was a strange story to hear in a London office from a highly respectable-looking old gentleman, now in his 'sixties. When one o'clock came, he would pick up his hat and umbrella and depart for lunch, returning punctually at two-thirty. Once or twice, it is true, there were awkward moments, as when Leach, one of the old-timers of the Yard who had arrested Eddie for the Lyons robbery, came along to tell me a few things about these American gangsters.

They met on the stairs, acquaintances, if not exactly friends, forty years afterwards and still knew each other! I learnt from Leach that Eddie Guerin had been held in vast respect by the C.I.D.! Still, we carried on without many such untoward interruptions.

Guerin had a marvellous memory. He described in graphic detail the three weeks' voyage across the South Atlantic, before the vessel dropped anchor at the Ile Royale in dazzling sunshine, with a white-clad commandant and a staff of armed men to greet them. And there Guerin re-

mained for the better part of five years. He was eventually sent to the main settlement on the mainland—the big camp of Maroni where the good-behaviour prisoners were kept—to stew and slave in the steaming heat until he succeeded in affecting that sensational escape which rang throughout the world.

Two of them got across the Maroni River which divides French from Dutch Guiana and some six weeks later, Guerin alone, his clothing in rags, starved, but still full of determination, arrived in Paramaribo, the capital of the colony. A young American Consul, full of admiration for his courage, hid him for a few weeks, and then got him passage on a British ship bound for New York.

He was only half-way through his adventures. One of the old friends of the underworld helped him with money and clothing, at the same time warning him that New York might be unsafe. Guerin took train for his Chicago and the first sign that greeted his eyes as he walked out of the station were newspaper bills blazoning it forth to the world that the man who had got away from Devil's Island was now in America.

He had plenty of friends in Chicago; one and all warned him that flight was the only salvation. Once again, then, he crossed the Canadian frontier, and by way of Montreal and Nova Scotia, returned to London.

A cautious peep around Piccadilly and Leicester Square quickly told him that plenty of old friends were still about. But they, too, were all against him showing himself around his old haunts. In desperation he went up to Leeds, where he worked at the only trade he had ever learnt, and that in prison, namely tailoring. It didn't appeal to him for long; be sure of that. Little by little he crept back to the old life; he found himself one day in a public-house in Tottenham Court Road much frequented by the underworld and there, lo and behold! was his old sweetheart.

Yes, she too was out of prison; she greeted Eddie with vociferous delight. It would be fitting to record that they married and lived happily ever afterwards. What actually happened was sad, but more or less inevitable. May began her old siren song; one night—they were then living in a Bloomsbury flat—Eddie came in unawares, caught the lady

in flagrante delicto, and threw her stark naked into the street, screaming like the veriest slut of the streets. She was taken off to the police station and the following day she sent for Chief Inspector Kane of the C.I.D. to tell him where the much-wanted Eddie Guerin might be found. As she well knew, the extradition warrant was also out in England.

Guerin was arrested the same day and lodged in Brixton Prison, there to be the subject of long-winded proceedings as he had been in 1887—The King versus The Governor of Brixton Prison, *ex parte* Guerin.

But this time the French didn't get their man so easily; in fact, they didn't get him at all. Sir Richard (at that time Mr.) Muir, never a man whose emotions were readily stirred, took a brief for nothing and fought every step of the extradition with his famous tenacity. The bone of contention was the prisoner's nationality. The French Government, of course, had to proceed through the Attorney-General, their case being that Guerin's father had become an American citizen.

That important fact was not established. Evidence laboriously collected on behalf of Guerin suggested that the father had never taken out naturalization papers in the States. At the final hearing, *fourteen* months after Guerin had lain in Brixton Prison, a Divisional Court made absolute the rule *nisi* for a *habeas corpus* which he had obtained, the Lord Chief Justice in giving judgment stating that Guerin was a British subject.

It was all double-Dutch to Eddie; he stood in the small dock listening with puzzled ears to the judgment of the Court, until Mr. Justice Darling (one of the three members of the Court) pointed to him and said to the usher: "Tell the prisoner he is free to go." That Eddie did understand; with one gigantic leap he was over the dock rail, to rush across the Court to the dignified, white-haired Muir who had gained him his freedom. Muir did not deign to notice the outstretched hand; he would have no such scenes in the hallowed atmosphere of a High Court. He just walked out as though he had never known Guerin!

However, the drama still had a grand finale. During the time he had been in Brixton Prison, Guerin had made the acquaintance of another American burglar, a gentleman who

had been picked up in Park Lane attempting to break into a big house. Laconic was hardly the word to describe this individual. When the police demanded his name, he growled out: "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere." Later, under pressure, he confessed to being Charles Smith, but Scotland Yard got him identified from New York as Cubine Jackson, high-class cracksman.

Eddie seems to have become very friendly with him, putting him up to a few wrinkles which might beat the London police. He also, writhing under the treachery of "Chicago May", confided to "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" what fate lay in store for May should he ever gain his release in England. Vitriol was one of the punishments that awaited her—only one.

"Mr. Nobody", thanks to Eddie, dodged the law and, full of joy, made tracks for the West End haunts of the American crooks. Here he ran into "Chicago May" and with gross ingratitude related all that her one-time lover intended. May promised him that she would get Eddie first; she threw her spells so well around the Brooklyn burglar that he swore he would be the instrument of her vengeance.

Of all this poor Eddie was blissfully innocent. On the night following his escape from extradition, he sat in the old Provence Café in Leicester Square, dipping long and frequently into the flowing bowl with a party of his cronies, male and female. About midnight, with a lady to keep him company, he staggered out of the Provence and walked up towards the Bloomsbury flat which he still possessed. He did not see the hansom-cab which followed close behind.

It was much quieter as he reached Russell Square. Suddenly the air was rent with an infuriated yell and a succession of pistol shots. A man, as well as a woman, had leapt out of the cab. Six shots reverberated throughout the silence of the night and one of them found a mark in Guerin's foot. Hard by, in the entrance of the Tube Station, a woman was yelling blue murder; it was "Chicago May", crying for her new protector to kill the old. Police came running up; the would-be assassin dropped his now-useless pistol and took to his heels. But he did not get far; an athletic young constable neatly tripped him up and before long Hunter Street police station was crowded with an

excited throng of prisoners and witnesses—"Chicago May" still breathing blood and fire. Guerin, only slightly wounded, was taken off to the Royal Free Hospital.

So now there came another sensational affair concerning Eddie. "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" and "Chicago May", much to their surprise, were indicted for attempted murder. The trial was before Mr. Justice Darling one of the judges of the Court that had ordered Guerin's release in 1907.

They took it all as a huge joke, telling each other it would mean a few months at the most. They got the shock of their lives; the judge told them that gangster feuds had no place in English life. Cubine Jackson would go to penal servitude for life, May Churchill for fifteen years. The man leaned over the dock and shouted to Mr. Justice Darling words that were unspeakably foul; May also added her quota. Down below in the cells afterwards, she collapsed.

She served her time in the Female Convict Prison at Aylesbury, then under the charge of the self-same Dr. John Morton I have mentioned elsewhere. Dr. Morton told me she soon recovered her accustomed impudent confidence. She terrified all the other prisoners; she even, on one noteworthy occasion, tried to "mash" old Lord Rothschild, who lived at Tring and frequently visited the gaol. May, of course, was the object of much interest to everybody, a fact which did not displease her.

Numerous efforts were made to obtain her release by influential Americans in England; but we kept her until 1917, when she was put on board a New York-bound liner vowing that one day she would return to our inhospitable shores and take toll for all we had done to her. However, such things were denied her; she died in America on May 30, 1929, at the age of fifty-two and Eddie Guerin, for one, took considerable comfort from the fact.

Well, all this human story, veritably an *Odyssey* of the Underworld, made a big splash in one of our most popular Sunday papers. There had never been another yarn like it. With a substantial sum of money for his labours, Eddie faithfully promised me that he would buy himself a small tobacco and paper shop and never trouble the police again.

Alas and alack! It was but a year or two later, after he

had proved so strongly that crime couldn't pay, that I saw his name in the Press as having been arrested in Victoria Station for a mean little theft—just stealing someone's luggage. And so it went on. Magistrates to whom his dignified bearing and stirring story made a sympathetic appeal would release him on probation; it was all in vain.

Occasionally I met him in the streets; he would borrow a couple of pounds and go off, morbidly proud of being pointed out wherever he went. "Look, there's Eddie Guerin," secretly filled him with delight. Governors of gaols to whom he was an old and esteemed client begged of him not to end his days in a prison. He made a practice of saying that his past always pursued him, which was just nonsense. What always brought his downfall were City lights, the gay life of the saloons, the easy admiration of the younger generation of crooks.

To be the old master, to boast of "Chicago May" and Devil's Island, that was the life he really loved. But at last, in his eighty-first year, the iron constitution, which had successfully withstood ravages which would have killed off ninety-nine men out of a hundred, would stand no more. In December 1940, in Jericho Emergency Hospital, Bury, he, at long last, gave up the ghost.

He had enjoyed a pretty good innings.

Of course, these daring bank robbers don't exist in England. They can't hop across a State border as they can in America; secondly, the penalties in this country imposed upon men who rob with violence are always a stiff dose of penal servitude, plus the "cat". Carrying firearms isn't tolerated here like it is across the Atlantic.

Only now and again does one of our banks get properly "done", the classic case being a little affair in Sunderland which betokened the work of a master brain.

There walked into this bank one morning a distinguished-looking old chap who asked if he might see the manager. He gave his name as Richards, adding that he was in the ship chartering trade, and wanted to open an account for the trifling sum of £500; it was merely expense money.

He made a great impression on to staff, for it seemed that he spent a great deal of his time in Paris, and spoke French

fluently. The manager's son, a boy who had just attained his majority, was fairly fascinated with the new customer. Mr. Richards, for his part, also took a great fancy to the young man. Various friends of Mr. Richards came upon the scene and were in their turn introduced to the bank.

Never had the staff known anyone so likeable. One morning Mr. Richards arrived about nine o'clock, asking whether they would mind cashing a cheque for him before hours. The cashier said it would be a pleasure. The money had not yet been brought from the strong room, and the cashier went to get it, accompanied, if you please, by the genial Mr. Richards, who remarked: "Oh, so that's where you keep all your wealth!"

He bade them all a grateful good morning, and left behind him the impression that he was the nicest old fellow in the world.

Now, without any further ado, it might be as well to unmask Mr. Richards and tell who he really was—a double-dyed old crook who had been engineering bank frauds for many years. He never committed the actual crime himself; that he left to his two aides, known in Sunderland as Armstrong and Thompson. They had many other names, but one was as good as another.

Having succeeded in getting a cheque cashed before hours, they knew exactly where to go when the hour struck. The problem now confronting them was to get hold of the bank keys, just long enough to take wax impressions. This was a job that either Armstrong or Thompson could manage with ease; they had had plenty of experience.

They thought, first of all, that the keys were carried by the manager's son. Mr. Richards kindly invited the boy to have a day with him at Newcastle, and while in that grimy city suggested a Turkish bath. What could be nicer? The young fellow had never tried one, but he was game for anything and sat in the steaming atmosphere, devoid of all his clothes, little knowing that while he was doing so the two confederates, disguised as attendants, were going through all his belongings in search of the much-wanted keys. Alas, they drew blank.

The next move in the game took place in the billiards

room of Richards's hotel. What more natural than a hundred-up between the old gentleman and his young friend?

It was still winter-time and the ever-present Armstrong shiveringly said it would be cold work. So he piled up a roaring big fire, one that made the room almost as hot as the Turkish Baths in Newcastle. Richards thought he had better take his coat off and courteously suggested his opponent should do the same.

They played on and the marker was sent for drinks. Armstrong, admittedly a gentleman of some dexterity, took advantage of the marker's absence to search the young man's pockets once more. He found what he wanted this time and with commendable speed adjourned to the lavatory, where with a convenient piece of wax he took impressions of all the keys.

Unnoticed he returned them to their proper owner and the game proceeded apace.

Richards was fully aware from what he had seen when he cashed his early morning cheque that the key of the bullion safe was kept by Kaines, the cashier, a slightly tougher nut to crack.

As ways and means of obtaining this particular key, Richards sought to take up his residence in the house where the cashier had rooms. However, the landlady pleaded lack of accommodation and Richards had to dilate long and earnestly on the beneficial effect a Turkish bath would have on Kaines.

Ultimately he had his way and when the two reached there, Richards, as an additional treat, advised a shampoo. This, of course, was a process calling for the undivided attention of the unconscious victim. He had left all his bank keys, except that of the bullion safe, in the office of the hotel were the baths were situated. The bullion key he kept in his clothes.

Armstrong was still in evidence, though unrecognisable as before. As Kaines was being lathered, his friend Richards stood by watching the operation and chatting. Meanwhile, the ubiquitous Armstrong ran through the cashier's pockets and finding what he wanted, did the necessary.

Unsuspectingly the cashier went back to Sunderland.

Four and a half months had gone by since all this had begun, a long time for even the cleverest of criminals to wait. Still, it was worth while; very few robbers could boast that the contents of a bank were theirs almost for the asking.

On a dark winter's night in March, when the bitter breezes from the North Sea were whistling through the streets of Sunderland, Armstrong and Thompson, with Richards discreetly keeping watch for the policeman on the beat—opened the front door of the Sunderland bank, saying to themselves, no doubt: "It's a shame to take the money."

However, they overcame their remorse and got to work on the bullion safe, which yielded up £7,000 odd. Cheques, silver and copper were thrust aside as of no consequence. With £6,300 in notes and gold they felt highly-satisfied and they left with the plunder in a black brief bag they agreed that the "Old Man" (Richards) was surely the world's marvel.

And they never found the "Old Man". Armstrong, after a long search, was located in a Soho hostelry, and when it dawned upon him that he would be the only victim, he told the men from Scotland Yard all about this prettily-planned little business. Great was his disgust as he considered that he had all the punishment, and the "Old Man" most of the money.

About the cleverest criminal of whom I could claim considerable knowledge was Joseph Grizard, the East-End Jew who engineered the Hatton Garden pearl robbery which took place in 1913.

The exploits of this man, in his thirty years of crime, would fill a substantial volume. You could describe him without exaggeration as a master-mind of the underworld, who kept in his pay dozens of men who would not only commit robberies for him, but also spy out the land.

He had an Intelligence service of his own, solely for the purpose of getting on the trail of big consignments of jewellery in transit. By this method in 1913, probably through someone in the office talking indiscreetly, he learnt that Mr. Max Mayer, the largest pearl merchant in Hatton Garden, would shortly be receiving something of enormous

value. Grizard may not have known for certain that pearls were coming; he may have expected diamonds, which were far more negotiable. At all events, when the all-important package was opened in Mr. Mayer's office, lumps of sugar were found instead of a pearl necklace worth £130,000.

A reward of £10,000 was offered for information for the recovery of the stolen jewels. A month later two Paris brokers heard through underground channels that an Antwerp dealer held some of the missing pearls. They trapped this man into going to London with them, when Grizard was connected with the affair.

He and three other men, after tremendous activity on the part of Scotland Yard and the assessors, were subsequently arrested and sent to penal servitude.

But this was only one of many similar crimes that Grizard planned. One of his most famous exploits concerned the robbery of £30,000 worth of pearls and diamonds from an Antwerp jeweller named Frederick Goldschmidt.

It did not take the police long to realize who was at the bottom of the affair. A few days later a party of men from the Yard walked in upon Grizard at his abode in Dalston. They found him sitting down with a number of his cronies to supper, the *pièce de résistance* thereof being that celebrated Jewish soup *locksher*, a thick glutinous concoction containing many strange ingredients.

Mr. Grizard bore the ordeal with his customary resignation. He allowed the callers to ransack the house from top to bottom, even to search his person, and also those of his friends, with no violent protest. Nothing came to light. Mr. Grizard uttered an ironical farewell and then sat down to resume his interrupted meal.

The soup by now was doubtless a trifle cold. But Mr. Grizard did not seem to mind. With a broad wink to his companions, he thrust a predatory forefinger into the locksher and hooked out what Scotland Yard had been looking for—a £15,000 pearl necklace abstracted from Mr. Frederick Goldschmidt just a week ago.

Grizard was the man who became the owner of that famous Ascot Gold Cup stolen from the lawns in 1907.

Although he did not even think of engineering this daring deed, the Cup, worth a matter of £250, came into his possession through one of his friends in the underworld. It was just a chance crime, due to carelessness on the part of the people who had to guard the trophies.

Many people will still remember that most famous of all newspaper bills:

MARK TWAIN ARRIVES

ASCOT GOLD CUP STOLEN

Fortunately, the author of *Innocents Abroad* retained his sense of humour.

For some years after the affair, Grizard used to bring the cup out and invite his most intimate cronies to drink out of it, at the same time asking them if they knew how he had won an Ascot Gold Cup. The last time I saw him was at the Old Bailey in 1922, a dying man. In his day, he must have been extremely wealthy; but in all probability the manner in which he disposed of his money was as mysterious as the way he had acquired it.

But let's have done with crime. I could tell innumerable stories of men and women who have come my way, society adventureuses, gaming-house sirens and what not, who have fluttered around the candle of that life which circulates in what is loosely described as the West End of London. They come and go, wealthy one day, penniless the next.

By way of a change, I am going to relate some of the adventures I have had with spies, the first of whom must be Gustav Steinhauer, the man known as the master spy of the Kaiser.

CHAPTER XIV

SPIES AND THE MASTER SPY

MANY people have written about this Gustav Steinhauer, without ever clapping eyes on the gentleman. According to some of them, he was Dr. Steinhauer—this on account

of the myth that all mysterious Germans are Doktor Something or other—while others put him down as a Major.

Having enjoyed the felicity of knowing Steinhauer intimately, I can state exactly what he was—a kind of super-policeman who enlisted spies all over Europe, and England in particular, in the intervals of guarding the sacred person of William II. He was just plain Herr Steinhauer, who had started life in the Imperial German Navy, and from there found himself drafted to the Kaiser's yacht *Hohenzollern*.

Realizing this mode of life to be devoid of much opportunity, he emigrated to America, spent a few years there, learnt to speak English well, and subsequently went back to Germany, where he found employment in the Berlin police. In course of time, with his knowledge of our language, he was transferred to the Secret *Polizei*, which in England would correspond to Scotland Yard's Special Branch. In this capacity, as with many of our men, he had to guard the safety of his more-or-less beloved monarch and I am breaking no confidences when I reveal that he had no unbounded admiration for the last of the Hohenzollern dynasty.

He became the principal bodyguard of the Kaiser, accompanying him everywhere and remaining with him until the time came for the fallen Emperor to flee to Holland.

From about 1900 Steinhauer began his secret service activities. Germany had begun to build a big Navy and to that end, Steinhauer was entrusted with the formation of a spy system in England to pry out naval information. Agents were installed at places like Portsmouth, Chatham, Sheerness, Rosyth, Hull, Liverpool and many other places, and operated with varying success for a number of years. Several were caught and sent to prison, but always the work went on.

How Steinhauer acquired the soubriquet of "master spy of the Kaiser" was simple enough. Scotland Yard and the English counter-espionage officials knew full well that every time the Kaiser visited us, the artful Steinhauer always utilized the chance to pay a friendly call upon his agents. One way and another, he popped in and out of England pretty regularly before the Great War broke out. He was here as late as July 1914 and even had the audacity to run

up to the Orkneys to ascertain whether Scapa Flow would be suitable as a base for the Grand Fleet.

There were quite a number of men keeping him informed of what was going on in the Senior Service, notable among them being the traitorous Chief Gunner, George Charles Parrott, who was caught red-handed selling our secrets to the German Admiralty.

But easily the most valuable spy that Steinhauer planted in England was one Frederick Schroeder, who, under the good old English name of Gould, obtained the licence of the "Queen Charlotte", a public house in Rochester, Kent. In this place, so close to Chatham, Schroeder conducted a spy service for no less than eleven years, an achievement which would have been impossible if he had not carried all his information personally to Germany on small steamers sailing out of the Medway.

Schroeder I met when I went over to Potsdam. The German secret service authorities, after he had served six years for espionage in England, were apparently of the opinion that he deserved some recognition of his good work. He was provided with a nice little *Weinstube* facing the big parade ground at Potsdam, a place much frequented by the senior officers. A burly, bearded fellow, speaking perfect English, he certainly gave you the impression of being a dangerous spy. He treated me with great effusiveness, but wouldn't talk when I suggested a few revelations of his Jekyll and Hyde existence in England. That, I gathered, was the *raison d'être* of the *Weinstube*—silence.

Steinhauer himself was intriguing enough to satisfy any writer in search of sensation. Over six feet in height, with rather crafty little eyes, he was positively massive in build—and appetite as well, if it comes to that. One could well believe that during his twenty-five years with the German royal family, he had lived on the fat of the land. His tastes were epicurean, his capacity terrific. Among his most treasured mementoes of England was a stack of menu cards from Simpson's in the Strand. Every story he told had something to do with food.

He lived, I discovered, in Grosse Weinmeisterstrasse, Potsdam, in a house standing in one of the old Imperial

parks. Hard by, in a house no better, was the youngest surviving son of the Kaiser, Prince Oscar, his wife and with three of their four children. He introduced me to the Prince and Princess; I found them a quiet, unassuming pair who seemed thankful enough to be free from the domination of the autocratic Kaiser. Both Oscar and his wife went about Potsdam as unobtrusively as one could imagine. I was interested to see the Prince, a slim, fair-haired man, riding a bicycle wherever he went, while as for the wife, she took a penny bus if she went into Potsdam to do a little shopping.

I saw them together one day, with the eldest boy, entering a clothing shop in the main street. Just for curiosity, I followed them. They were buying an overcoat for the son and what they chose cost them exactly eighteen shillings! It was just a piece of shoddy at which any English house-wife would have turned up her nose. People always accused the Kaiser of being incredibly mean; he had a colossal income at his disposal in Holland, but what he did with the money, no one knew. Oscar, at any rate, seemed to have none of it.

Nor had Prince August Wilhelmin, the stout son who also lived in Potsdam. With him, too, I had a chat, and discovered that if he had had his way, there would have been no war with England. And that applied, I imagine, to all the Kaiser's six sons. The thought often occurs to me whether we, or the French, were particularly clever in deposing the Hohenzollern dynasty. What arrived in its place was not exactly an improvement!

Without a doubt Germany was undergoing hard times during the period I spent there. Potsdam fairly swarmed with out-of-work Generals, living on some meagre pension. One could well imagine how they would jump at the chance of another war. I used to watch them walking around the streets of Potsdam with their wives, smart-looking men, asking themselves, no doubt, what would be the end of them. Of a morning a stream of them would pass the Palast Hotel where I stayed, *en route* to Berlin, trying to pick up a little money.

Many of these men I encountered at Schroeder's *Weinstube*; their libations consisted of a mark bottle of wine, exactly

one shilling's worth. They were all friendly enough; any animosity they still harboured was for the French and the occupation of the Ruhr by black troops.

Nazism was just beginning to rear its head; round Berlin and Potsdam you could see lorry-loads of young Brown Shirts doing just as they pleased. The seeds of war were being sown in those days, though nothing will change my opinion that if the situation had been properly handled, Hitler would never have obtained the mastery of Germany.

Steinhauer himself was feeling the general pinch. The Republican Government had given him a small pension, some three or four pounds a week; the arrival of an allegedly rich Englishman to buy his Memoirs looked like a gift from heaven. He came up to Berlin to meet me, remarked that a little seclusion would be advisable, and arranged for me to live at the Palast Hotel, Potsdam. Here I was given, as a distinguished visitor, the royal suite right across the front of the hotel. In the morning, on coming down to breakfast, I found three waiters anxious to greet me. One of them Hugo Albrecht by name, inquired how everybody was getting on at home, and informed me, *inter alia*, that he had been fifteen years at the Royal York, Brighton, with Harry Preston.

I told Harry about this when I returned home; he remembered the man well.

Steinhauer took me all round Potsdam, introducing me everywhere with vast effusion. I was escorted around the Royal palaces, the Nieué, which adjoined my hotel, and Sans Souci, a hideous baroque building whose grounds were fairly littered with statues. Many of them, I learnt, were the Kaiser's own handiwork; they looked it.

Odd occurrences linger in my mind in these jaunts with the Master Spy. I entertained him to lunch at the Klosterkeller, the best restaurant in the town. Most of the foreign diplomats used to eat there on visiting Potsdam; the prices ranged accordingly. We had a first-class meal; at its conclusion, Steinhauer called the waiter over and whispered something. The remains of our repast were all carefully collected, wrapped in a piece of white paper and neatly tied up, to be handed to my guest.

We walked towards his home in Grosse Weinmeister-

strasse; as we reached the gate, three cats came running down the garden path to meet their master.

"*Mein Katzen,*" explained *Der Meisterspion* with a slight blush. As I say, hard times.

He had a wife who spoke English fluently; she had been a governess in Streatham.

The adventures of Steinhauer, in conjunction with one Pierre Theisen, constitute half the secret history of Europe in the days preceding the Great War. Theisen, I might explain, was a Belgian who for many years was *the* German spy against France. Born at Arlon, close to Luxembourg, he had been caught spying in Paris in the 'nineties—only a trifling affair—and given six years in a very bad prison. He returned to Berlin where, in close association with the famous General von Schlieffen, the Chief of the Great General Staff, he began an intensive campaign of espionage in France which lasted right up to 1914. Theisen's methods were simple, but wonderfully effective. He sat in an Alsatian town—then, of course, German—just inside the frontier, and made it his business to entice traitorous officers to slip across the border and sell him their secrets.

The French knew all about him, but he, for his part, knew as much as anybody could want to know about them. Shortly before the Great War, he established himself in Brussels, with the object of insinuating himself into the Belgian Staff, in readiness for *Der Tag*. Unfortunately for him, the French were also aware of the ruse; there lived in Brussels, on a sort of counter-mission errand, their ultraclever agent, old Emile Moutier. He was watching Theisen all the time; when the war came, the French police went hurrying over to Brussels and apprehended their long-wanted man.

Closely guarded and chained, he was taken over to England, kept here some little time, and then removed to Havre. The French tried him for numerous offences of espionage; the sentence of the court-martial was transportation for life to Devil's Island. There, or probably at Maroni, he remained for eleven years. In 1926 the German Government demanded to know if he were alive or dead. The French produced him still alive, a broken, white-

haired old man, and sent him back to Berlin with their compliments.

Steinhauer asked if I would like to meet him. "By all means," I replied. "He would be interesting if he would talk."

It seemed that Theisen was a little shy of meeting unknown people. I was taken first to a restaurant in Berlin where, ignorant of the fact, Theisen surreptitiously inspected me. Eventually he came over to our table and I said to myself: "Well, my friend, whatever harm you have done to France, you have certainly paid for it." If ever I saw a human wreck, that was one.

He was a highly-cultured man. Later on, I induced him to write me some of his experiences, but found them unpublizable. He would reveal nothing of his actual work, telling me that to do so would harm many people. What he wrote was nothing but frightfully bitter invective, in words that only a Dumas could have used.

More interesting still were a couple of meetings with Colonel Wilhelm Nicolai, *the* Chief of the German secret service. As I went through with my work with Steinhauer, one fact kept obtruding itself, that the man I really wanted was the head of the whole German spy system. Steinhauer arranged for me to have a talk with Nicolai; I had lunch with him at the Eden Hotel in Berlin, where I made him a very big offer for the innermost secrets of his department.

Nicolai, still going strong, was a medium-height man of dark complexion with intensely piercing eyes. They never left your face all the time he was talking to you. Slightly bald, and speaking fairly good English, I discovered he knew a great deal about the British secret service, and, what is more, held it in the deepest respect. He told me much of what had gone on in Holland during the war and also confessed that England had been a rank failure with his spies. I asked him if he knew how Sir Vernon Kell had wiped up all his agents. He just smiled and remarked: "I have never believed the English to be so foolish as the Kaiser was always telling us. Also, I never believed in war with England."

He promised to let me have his decision later concerning the book I wanted him to write. He had already published

two, neither of which disclosed much of importance. My suggestion was another and more detailed one written from the actual documents in the Kriegministerium.

"Yes," he said to that, "and if I were to do such a thing, it would probably mean living out of Germany for the remainder of my days. Still, I will let you know."

I thought it not unlikely that I might be suspected of being an English agent myself. However, in a few days' time a telephone message reached me to see him again in Berlin, when he informed me that my request was impossible.

"There may be another war in the not-distant future," he explained. "At the present, as you see, I am walking around the city doing nothing. But these are uncertain times." This was said with a smile.

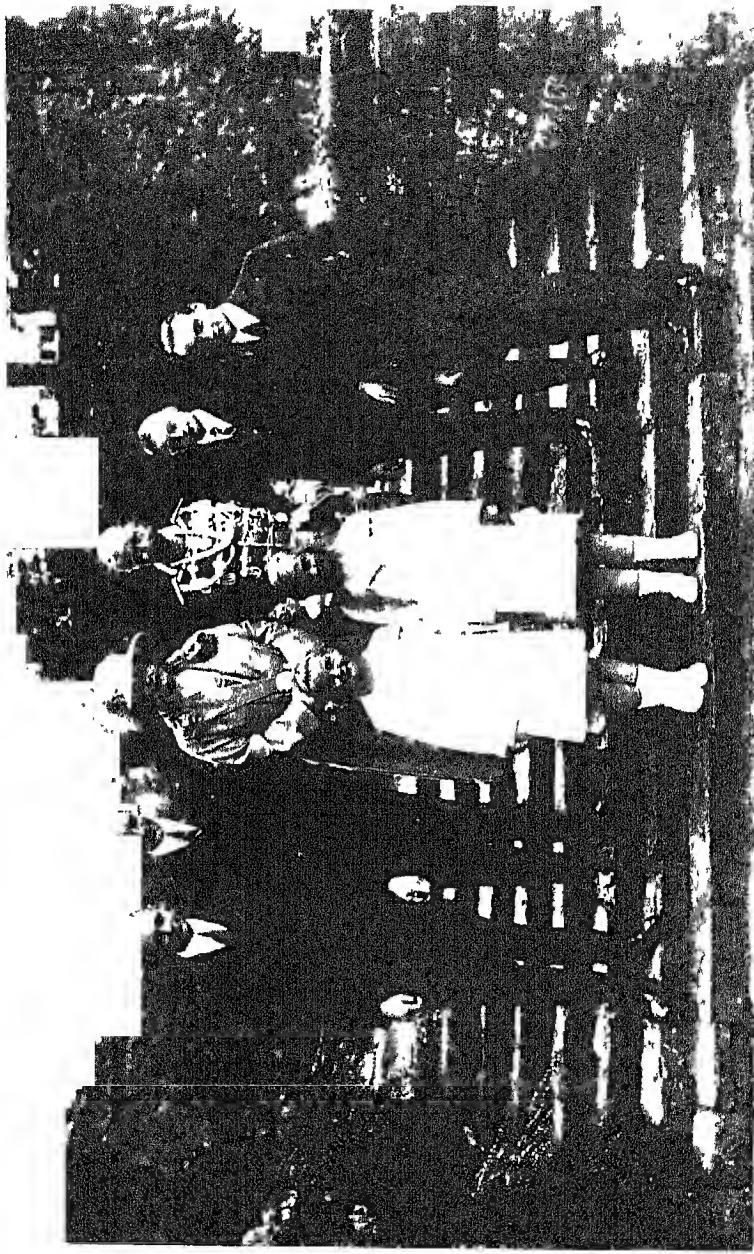
Some three of four years later, Nicolai was brought back to his old post. In 1933, fortified by the admitted failures of the past with their secret services, the Germans, with Nicolai as the inspiring genius, began organizing the greatest chain of espionage the world has ever known. In France, Holland, Norway, Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the United States, South America, there were huge nests of these secret agents. Millions of pounds were spent, where previously cheese-paring had been the order. All the Embassies and Legations were nothing but spy centres, working in close collaboration with the Nazi cells which wreaked such damage when the second World War began in 1939.

I have digressed at some little length to write of these men. Why I have done so is because I am the only English writer who has ever known them. Most of the spy literature that appeared after the Great War was arrant fiction, a choice specimen thereof being the romance that was woven around the alleged doings of the notorious Mata Hari.

For some part in the cycle of stories and legend about Mademoiselle Docteur, heroine of a film with Greta Garbo in the leading rôle, I must plead guilty. Talking one day with Sir Vernon Kell, he told me about stories he had heard of a fearsome woman, supposed to be a doctor, who enlisted spies for duty in England, and shot them if they showed the slightest reluctance to risk their lives for the Fatherland. I gave the lady no more than a bare passing mention in my



Wilhelm Von Nicolai, Chief of the German Secret Service



The ex-Crown Prince of Germany and his family

German Spies at Bay. With what result? Someone in France wrote what I believe to be a fictitious book about her, endowing her with all manner of sensational exploits.

This provoked a challenge from the German Embassy in Paris, saying that Mlle Docteur was like Mrs. 'Arris; there was "no such person". The author retorted by naming one Fraulein Schragmuller, then conveniently at death's door in a Swiss sanatorium, dying from consumption. He also quoted your humble servant as the final proof that Mademoiselle *had* existed. All this failed to deter Hollywood; a film came out and made a lot of money, but no one offered *me* any author's rights.

I spoke to Steinhauer about the lady; he laughed boisterously and inquired why they should want women to run their espionage services. Nicolai had never heard of her; he was no fonder of the fair sex as spies than our own "C", whom I have mentioned earlier on. Women have an awkward habit of putting pleasure before business. The French, according to the gallant Colonel, with their eternal foolish inhibitions about sex, were the ones who used women to whedgle secrets out of foolish German officers. Also the Russians; most of their ballet dancers, he said, were spies in one form or another.

Our own reputation in Germany in this debatable field of strategy stood marvellously high. What we attempted was done with real experts, who knew what they were after. We were also much more successful in the long run than the Germans, if only for the reason that we paid our agents well and treated them generously, even if they failed.

In many disguises, Steinhauer was a frequent visitor to England for a dozen years prior to the Great War. Parrott's case made an intriguing story, if only to show how even the most cleverly-concocted schemes can come unstuck. The origin of this affair was that a waiter in London named Karl Hentschel, was sent down to Sheerness, in the rôle of a teacher of languages. His orders from Steinhauer were to find a man in the Royal Navy who would be useful to the Admiralty Intelligence Staff in Berlin. George Parrott, the Chief Gunner I have mentioned, fell into Hentschel's

net and over a period of two years, sold the Germans much valuable information, especially concerning the armament of our new Dreadnoughts.

All went swimmingly for quite a time; then Parrott thought he would eliminate the middle-man, as many a primary producer does. He communicated direct with Berlin, with the result that Hentschel promptly gave him away. Travelling to Ostend one week-end to meet a mythical lady, Parrot was followed and arrested on his return to England. He accounted for his movements with a yarn about a married woman he had picked up at the Palace music-hall in London. However, the evidence in possession of M.I. 5 was much too strong; he had been under observation a long time. Penal servitude for four years was his punishment.

It is not uninteresting to record that identically similar circumstances marked the downfall of another traitor in 1933; I mean the Seaforth Highlander officer, Norman Baillie-Stewart. The fascinating "Marie-Louise" in his instance had just as much existence as Parrott's mysterious lady.

Now and again in his narrative Steinhauer would pause to relate stories of unwarrantable interference with the dangerous, and ill-paid work he was undertaking in England. Zealous but well-meaning officers in his Admiralty Intelligence were always picking up some adventurer with a specious tongue, who soon got unmasked and made it difficult for him to carry on.

"There was, for instance," said *Der Meisterspion* morbidly, "that unmitigated rascal Armgard Karl Graves. They sent him to Edinburgh, with instructions to spy on the big Beardmore works at Glasgow. He did not last long; I saw to that."

I gathered that Steinhauer had actually brought about Graves's downfall himself! He sent the gentleman his wages, wrongly addressed. The letter, written on the forged note-paper of Burroughs, Wellcome, Ltd., the famous manufacturing druggists—Graves was posing in Edinburgh as a medical man taking a refresher course—got back to the firm. In due course it reached Sir Vernon Kell and Graves finished up in prison.

Another wrong 'un, according to Steinhauer's lights, was Wilhelm Klare who, under the name of Clare, ran a shilling dentistry in Portsmouth, one of Steinhauer's strongholds.

This *was* real poaching on dangerous coverts, brought about by more foolishness on the part of the bright young sparks of the German Admiralty. In due course, therefore, Klare came to an unfortunate end. "Acting on information received", as they say in police circles, a trap was laid for Wilhelm, into which he fell with pathetic readiness, not in the least fitting with the tall tales he had told about his cleverness.

Then came the crowning foolishness—the discovery of Karl Gustav Ernst, hairdresser of King's Cross, who was Steinhauer's "letter-box" for most of the agents in England.

"And they also blamed *me* for *that*," he went on, even more morbidly. "From the Kaiser downwards, who had to be told we had no agents left in England when war was declared, I was the man held responsible. They sent Carl Lody to England dead against my advice; he was just a bungling amateur who would not last a day in any well-guarded country. Then they employed a number of people in Holland to do their work; I was not good enough.

"None of these agents achieved anything of importance; they were bound to be caught immediately, as happened."

One way and another, the great man had a distinct grievance. . He had been relegated to minor jobs in Denmark and Poland, far away from the countries he knew best. The Kaiser was rarely accessible those days, having intimated that Steinhauer had badly fallen down on his job.

There were many Rabelaisian episodes in the good old days, however. One concerned his creeping under the bed of a German officer who had succumbed to a pretty French spy; here Steinhauer spent a stifling two hours listening to alternate love-making and gross treason. Again, there was the French actress caught red-handed stuffing a valuable stolen document down the stocking which covered her shapely leg. This occurred at a reception attended by the Kaiser; it took some little strategy to have the lady shadowed and compelled to disgorge the prize at the point of a pistol.

Polish Mary! That was indeed a diverting story, of a very entrancing adventuress who spied first for Germany,

then for Russia. Steinhauer had been entrusted with the task of covering Polish Mary, for she became suspect very quickly. However, she took the pitcher to the well once too often. The Russians caught her in a Polish town where such sirens looked singularly out of place. She told them that she really worked for them; they retorted by hanging her high from a hastily-erected gallows.

Now and again, *Der Meisterspion* grew a trifle sentimental; there seemed to have been quite a few lovely ladies with whom he had enjoyed an *affaire-de-coeur*, such as the one he called the Baroness in Green. Her real name he would never divulge. "You may call her Lilika", he told me, "and that is all." She wore green dresses, this strange creature; green shoes, green stockings, green hat, even, let it be whispered, green lingerie. But there her verdancy ended; the Germans had installed her in Copenhagen, a perfect hotbed of espionage, to cajole secrets out of the French and Russian Intelligence officers, only to discover that she was betraying her employers.

So it came about that on one occasion when the Baroness had to visit Berlin, there appeared on the scene a rich Dutch Baron—no less a person than Steinhauer. He was under orders to trap this dainty Delilah and he succeeded so well that she confessed the double rôle she had been playing. Then came a court-martial at Hanover and Lilika should have died; but at the very last minute the repentant lover successfully interceded to save her life.

It was an interesting interlude in the journalistic existence. Steinhauer was good entertainment, more so, perhaps, when you got him talking about the Kaiser. I heard that whenever the All-Highest went to bed of a night, his suite would sit up specially to pick him to pieces. The royal gentleman, from all accounts, had hardly a real friend in the world.

Over a period of some twenty-odd years I came into contact with most of the secret service notabilities, in England, France, Germany, Belgium and America. They provided engrossing copy for a writer.

On and off, I spent three or four years in Brussels dealing with the Allied Intelligence work behind the German lines,

meeting, in the process, many heroic men and women who carried out espionage and sabotage for their country.

The term spy is an invidious one and should never be applied to such people. They are soldiers, doing a task far more dangerous than fighting in the field, but without the glory that surrounds the battlefield. Theirs, indeed, is a thankless mission, with death forever round the corner, with one trifling slip to bring them to their doom and a firing party in the cold dawn to end their life.

In Belgium alone two-hundred odd of these patriotic folk sacrificed their lives in the cause of freedom, men, women, and even mere children. I heard of a couple of Flemish peasant girls who so died, humble little creatures who deserved nothing more than imprisonment; of priests who were callously done to death in cold blood, and even of cases where wives were induced to betray their husbands.

All this, and worse, was repeated during the four years' occupation of Belgium during the present war. Those infamous *Conseils de Guerre Allemands* once more came into existence, condemning people to execution for the slightest infringement of the German War Code.

In Brussels I met the handsome Abbé Vincent de Moor, the curé of a church at Schaerbeek who took off his cassock and ran an Intelligence service for the Allies. He is now a Bishop in Canada, and therefore no harm will be done by a brief recital of his deeds.

I spent some considerable time with him; he was a jovial soul, with a prodigious appetite, a real Jolly Friar. For a few months he ran a pigeon post to England; the birds were kept in the roof of his house and carried valuable secrets to England until the time when the German secret *polizei* began swarming all over Brussels. Additionally, the Abbé was one of the founders of *La Libre Belgique*, that paper which called itself "regularly irregular". It used to be supplied, free of charge, to His Excellency the Governor, Baron von Bissing, in a place that he did not appreciate—the gubernatorial lavatory. The order went forth that everybody connected with the pestiferous organ was to be rounded up.

The Abbé had a visit from a spy, one Gaston Quien, afterwards used by the enemy to trap Nurse Cavell, an

offence which he expiated by serving twenty years in Cayenne. However, it was a case of the Abbé going while the going was good; in a huge manure barrel—he was no sylph—he went across the Dutch frontier and eventually found his way to the English War Office, where Authority suggested that he should conduct an Intelligence Service of his own in Belgium.

So the Abbé became “Mr. Marcel” for the duration and did good work until a treacherous woman broke up his band, a hundred and twenty strong. Tragically common were these cases, in many instances due to the stupidly parsimonious way in which money was allotted. This creature had been living with a man in the service who fell into German hands; she went to the Abbé Octave de Clercq, who acted as the “letter-box” of the organization in Ghent, to demand money which the Abbé did not possess. Thereupon she went to the German police and told all she knew.

From the viewpoint of the Allies, it meant the end of a most valuable service. From the human standpoint, many worthy people would lose their lives. One of the agents, whose two brothers were captured and shot, made it his business to see that summary justice was executed on this creature. This surviving brother, whom I met in Brussels, enticed her out of Courtrai and knifed her after she had confessed to her crime.

Many, indeed, were these gross betrayals. There was one man who became a professional “stool pigeon” for the notorious Dr. Hans Goldschmidt, a criminal lawyer from Elberfeld who enacted the rôle of what the French term *juge d'instruction*. This man had but one method—extracting confessions from his prisoners. He had the satisfaction of sending fifty or sixty people to firing squads at the Tir National, and perhaps another thousand more to die in German prison camps. But then poetic justice overtook him, in a way that he could never have expected.

When the Nazis began to purge the Jews out of all the professions in the Fatherland, this Goldschmidt became a refugee. He had the ineffable audacity to come to England and claim succour, as well as sanctuary, from the oppressors of his race. I made it my business to inform Sir Vernon Kell of his presence and at the earliest opportunity—it now

being near the outbreak of war—this sadistic brute was himself thrust into an internment camp. Here, his well-filled carcase softened by many years of luxurious living, he died, in circumstances, I dare say, infinitely more comfortable than those in which the poor Belgians had died in Germany.

Heartrending, indeed, were dozens of these cases in the Nine Provinces. I met a family, also in Brussels, of whom two, a brother and a sister, had been incarcerated in a cell overlooking the prison yard where their sixty-four-year-old father and another brother were executed. At Liège I saw the graves of dozens of simple Walloons, mostly sent to their death by cynical French agents who cared not a jot what happened to them so long as they drew *their* money.

I have never wondered why the Belgians wanted to have nothing to do with the French ever since. If my readers had heard the terrible stories that were told me in Liège by the survivors of those who had worked for the French secret service in the early days of the Great War, they would understand.

It was not until our own War Office took the whole of the Intelligence Services over that any decency was established. But that took time; in the beginning, the strangling hand of Whitehall, and the Treasury in particular, made the work of the agents well-nigh impossible. The Abbé de Moor, with one hundred and twenty agents on his books to pay, could count himself fortunate to receive 10,000 francs a month—a matter then of £500!

People working in these information services received three, four and five francs a day! They had to live, strange as it may seem, if only to be able to do what was required of them. And on the result of their labours our armies in France were dependent for knowledge of what was going on behind the enemy lines. However, when the Armistice came, those who were still alive had the satisfaction of getting a decoration; some had the O.B.E., hardly realizing its true value, others a plain War Medal.

I met the woman who took across the Dutch frontier, concealed around her body, the first gas mask the Germans had ready for the attacks in the spring of 1915, with innumerable details of the poison to be used. Her father, a

wealthy Ghent weaver, had the medical staff of the German Fourth Army billeted in his house. One night, when most of them were intoxicated, they began talking of the gas. This courageous old man sent his twenty-one year-old daughter to England with the tidings, only to find them disbelieved in London, but fully credited at the Belgian headquarters, then situated at St. Adresse, near Havre.

There is reason to believe, according to what the daughter told me, that her father was afterwards poisoned by a vengeful officer—he who had given away the secret.

These human stories fairly abounded. They had never even been heard of in England until I published them.

Brussels, with its attractive mixture of the medieval and the modern, made the ideal background for writing these romantic episodes of the German occupation. To leave the twentieth-century Hotel Metropole in the Place de Brouckère of a morning and spend a few hours delving among the Archives de la Guerre up at Anderlecht was just like entering another world. Here, indeed, was old Flanders, a vast rambling mansion guarded by formidable iron-barred doors and a cobblestone courtyard which had been there for centuries.

Inside the long and lofty rooms were magnificent carved stone fire-places, priceless oak panelling and pieces of furniture, antique for hundreds of years before Leopold of Saxe-Coburg came over from England to be the first King of the Belgians. It was, of course, bitterly cold in the winter. Beyond an occasional stove, you just sat there and shivered. Except a stray writer or two, few people ever came there.

About this time I chanced across what was surely one of the most interesting documents in the world, the German secret police dossier of *l'affaire Cavell*. One of my Belgian friends, who had been in the British Intelligence, informed me that it was in the possession of a German officer at Cologne. I made it my business on returning to England to put the matter before the Editor of the *People*, with the suggestion that it would constitute the basis of a wonderful story. The price for the papers was high and, as I soon realized on looking through them, a tremendous amount of work would be involved in getting a complete narrative of this outstanding episode of the Great War.

However, Mr. Ainsworth, the Editor, saw eye to eye

with me about this unique opportunity and I took the dossier back to England, with the kindly help of the Belgian, who went over to Cologne and brought it away with him.

It was a file of two hundred-odd pages, dealing with the Cavell case from start to finish and containing the "confessions" extracted from the thirty-five prisoners who were tried at the Senate House, Brussels, in October 1915. One got an illuminating glimpse of German military procedure in reading through this dossier, of how cleverly the two officers in charge of the *affaire* made the suspects incriminate each other and, finally, put their names to a confession written out in German—a language they did not understand.

It took me a long time to write this story, which eventually appeared in the *People* under a title that came to me in the middle of the night: *The Crime that Shook the World*. I wrote to Princess Marie de Croy, the châtelaine of that historic Château of Bellignies, where all this strange affair had originated. I also arranged to see Maitre Gaston de Leval, the well-known Brussels lawyer who had been a participant in that memorable scene which took place at the residence of Baron von der Lancken, the German Political Minister in Brussels, on the night preceding Nurse Cavell's execution. There were, in fact, dozens of people it became necessary to interview and, by the time I had finished, I could say to myself, with the dossier in my possession, that I knew more about the Cavell trial than anyone else.

Princess de Croy was kindness itself. She met me at the Hotel Meurice in Paris and gave me a vast amount of information. On a subsequent visit to Brussels I spent a day at her château and gazed with avid interest at the old Roman tower where the stragglers from the battle of Mons had been concealed by this courageous and delicate lady, afterwards to be taken on to Nurse Cavell's clinic in Brussels.

I think I rather surprised Her Highness by giving her from the dossier her own letters, and even the envelopes in which they had been enclosed, written during the period when she was held prisoner in the Kommandantur, Brussels.

The publication of this historic story caused a great sensation, even to the extent of the German Minister of Justice giving me half an hour on the wireless in an attempt to justify the shooting of Edith Cavell. There were also a

couple of humorous episodes which followed in its train. One of the men who had been through Nurse Cavell's hands, a soldier of the 1st Middlesex Regiment, came to see me and told me an interesting yarn of how he had been hidden by a miner in his cottage for six months before Princess de Croy's band of helpers picked him up.

He eventually reached England, and his regimental dépôt, in safety, though his reception was none too cordial. He narrowly escaped being treated as a deserter! Evidently a sting remained somewhere; when the war was over, the War Office refused him the Mons Star and also the six months' pay due to him for the time he was in hiding.

I published this remarkable act of our military pundits one Sunday. On the following Tuesday morning, without a single word of explanation, Private Stanton of the Middlesex Regiment, the man in question, received from the War Office a registered postal packet containing his missing Mons Star. He wrote me a letter saying that he might now hope to get his six months' pay.

A real "Irish bull" came from one of the Connaught Rangers who had also been sent on to England by Nurse Cavell's organization. This man told me of a woman who had sheltered him for a night just before crossing the Dutch frontier, adding: "Poor lady, she is dead at present!"

Several times I visited Nurse Cavell's cell in the prison of St. Gilles. It had been enshrined and was very well looked after. I wonder if this is still the case!

CHAPTER XV

OFF STAGE IN THE FILM STUDIO

LIKE many another scribe, I harboured ambitions of seeing on the films some of the big stories I had written. When *The Crime that Shook the World* was published, I approached the Gaumont-British Company with the idea.

Mr. Beverley Baxter, now M.P. for Wood Green, had just vacated the Editorship of the *Daily Express* to join the Ostrers and very kindly submitted the story to the firm.

However, they would not look at it, being of the opinion that it might be considered as anti-German propaganda. I sent it to Hollywood; no one was interested in war pictures.

But only a few years afterwards, Herbert Wilcox brought out a picture of *l'affaire Cavell*, with Anna Neagle in the title rôle. I was not greatly impressed by it. All the romantic drama which occurred at the Château de Bellignies had been omitted, as had the tremendous scene I have briefly mentioned in connection with Baron von der Lancken.

There was also a play produced at the Vaudeville Theatre shortly after the story began to appear, with Nancy Price playing Nurse Cavell. Considering that the authors were, in effect, cashing in on the special interest aroused by my publicity, they might at least have sent me a couple of complimentary tickets! The play had but a short run, which didn't in the least surprise me; it wanted doing on a big scale, a spectacle, if you like, to bring in the mass of incidents that began with the Battle of Mons and ended a little over a year afterwards at the Tir National in Brussels.

Of course, the man to contact if you wanted anything with British film companies was genial John Payne, the head of Bramlins', the biggest agency in the West End. John, who was really a solicitor, could call himself one of the pioneers of the pictures; he had been in them since the "silent" days, with a studio of his own.

Candour compelled him to confess that it was nothing more than the back garden of a private house in Finchley, on a raised platform, with Nature's own illumination and a general feeling among the players that a vast joke was on foot. He produced two-reelers—films utterly unknown to-day.

Now it was in this humble atmosphere that a very famous man made his début in films—no less a person, indeed, than Sir Cedric Hardwicke.

All this took place something like thirty years ago, when Sir Cedric was a student at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Word had gone round the West End that Payne was thinking of making a film and a bright young gentleman of his acquaintance, one George Dewhurst, then in the chorus of the old Alhambra, arrived in the office with a request for employment.

"Yes," said Payne, "quite true. The trouble is that so far I haven't got a story"—a minor detail in those care-free times.

"I'll soon fix that for you," replied George.

He went away and in two hours' time came back with what Payne wanted. It was written in a threepenny exercise book, on the marble-topped table of a Lyons tea-shop and Payne paid spot-cash for it, three guineas to be precise, which is a slight difference from the £30,000 that Hollywood companies give some high-class authors nowadays. It duly went into production—save the mark!—under the title of "The Dead Alive."

The glad news spread. Dewhurst broadcast the fact that he had found a "mug". Then he called again to ask whether Payne wanted a "crowd". If so, he possessed a pal who would be glad of a little work, a young fellow named Cedric Hardwicke.

"Well," Payne retorted to that, "you know what the pay is. Three-and-sixpence a day, with lunch thrown in."

"Thrown in or thrown out," said George. "He doesn't mind what the money is. All he wants is the experience."

At this princely remuneration, then, the eager-eyed young Hardwicke went up to Finchley and had the felicity of earning three-and-sixpence and a lunch "on the company". Sometimes "Father", in the person of Payne, sat at a table and carved up a joint, with everybody enjoying themselves enormously. When money was plentiful, he treated them to a one-and-sixpenny "ordinary" at the local public-house.

Dewhurst later on introduced another protégé of his—Ronald Colman, a good-looking young fellow, then in the 'twenties, whose elocution, apart from his attractive appearance, denoted the likely actor.

It was before the era of the "talkies", and Colman hitherto had practically nothing but amateur theatricals to his credit. One or two walking-on parts represented his actual stage experience.

However, Walter West, of Broadwest Films, good-naturedly gave him a small part in "Snow in the Desert", a picture he was making just then with Stewart Rome. He passed unnoticed, as did so many more men and women who subsequently rose to stardom.

For six months longer Colman vainly knocked at the door of fame. Payne saw him now and again in his office; the opportunities of unknown people breaking into films were meagre indeed. In despair, then, Colman decided to try his luck in New York and wasn't exactly a millionaire when he arrived there.

Funds got lower and lower. The American producers had little or no use for English actors. "Ronald Colman!" they said. "Never heard of you. What've you done?"

All Ronald could truthfully say was "A little stage work, a few films". They laughed kindly but contemptuously. An English name that could go up in electric lights on Broadway, yes. But Ronald Colman meant nothing.

In six months' time he was down to his last dime. A cheap room, meals when and where he could afford them, and the knowledge that a "break" had to come quickly, was his daily lot. Then, out of the darkness, came that turn of the wheel which so often comes a man's way when the future seems utterly hopeless. The Anglo-American producer, Gilbert Miller, wanted an Englishman for some trifling part; it was fifty dollars a week, a competence for Colman at that period. He jumped at it and comfortably enough played on Broadway, saving all he could against the rainy day that is always looming on the actor's horizon.

But Fate decreed otherwise. One of Hollywood's keen-eyed scouts descended on New York's Great White Way seeking an English actor who looked like a foreigner, but wasn't. There was a big picture in the offing, "The White Sister", starring the then-famous Lilian Gish.

Up and down Broadway, night after night, went that "spotter". The only man he could find suitable was the young Englishman, Ronald Colman. He went round backstage, interviewed Ronald in the small dressing-room he occupied with other minor members of the company, liked the looks of him, and crisply said: "Ever made a screen test?"

"So many," replied Ronald, "that I'm not making any more."

True enough he had, both in London and New York, and when he said he was sick and tired of the whole business, he spoke no more than the bare truth.

■ But this "Scout" wasn't to be rebuffed in such fashion. "Just come round to my studios and see how you photograph, Mr. Colman. To-morrow morning at eleven; it'll take you no more than an hour."

"I'm not interested, I tell you," replied Ronald.

The disappointed one eventually departed. Once more did he roam the Great White Way and always did he come back to gaze on Ronald Colman. One night he re-appeared in his dressing-room and on this occasion, deeming it about time to put his cards on the table, said to Colman: "I guess a little matter of a ten thousand dollars' contract might tempt you to make that screen test."

"Ah," said Ronald, "now you're talking business. I'll be round in the morning."

He photographed well; the picture went over to Hollywood and in double-quick time Ronald Colman found himself signing a contract to play opposite Lilian Gish in "The White Sister", a film to be made largely in Italy. He never looked back.

It just shows you. Hollywood went crazy over Ronald Colman. For big, foreign pictures he was well-nigh indispensable; he possessed that ideal blend of the romantic and the practical, the beau sabreur, that is so rarely seen in real life.

Following "The White Sister", the Hollywood magnates teamed him with the dainty Polish star, Vilma Banky, a glittering figure in the film firmament before the "talkies" took the world by storm and, incidentally, wrote "finis" to many artists whose English was not entirely faultless. Greta Garbo, Adolphe Menjou, and a few others managed to learn the language so well that their continued success was beyond doubt. But it was on the switch over, from silence to speech, that the English-speaking element really began their era of prosperity.

Colman's career is little short of astounding. He has been a member of the English colony at Hollywood from 1923 and he has never slipped from stardom. The answer? Well, he has looked after his money, never lost his head, and steadfastly refused to make pictures wholesale.

He and Charlie Chaplin have withstood time's ravening touch with uncanny wisdom. Colman's debonair figure and

crisp voice, as clear as a bell, are no different from what they were twenty years ago. In the "Prisoner of Zenda", "Rupert of Hentzau", "If I were King" and all those historical figures he plays so well, he is still the gallant cavalier, the well-bred man of action who put "Bulldog Drummond" on the screen and then said: "No more Bulldog, thank you. I'll be having hydrophobia soon."

It takes an ultra-clever man to stay nearly twenty years in Hollywood and still retain his place at the top. Cleverer still, perhaps, to keep his money and be able to say: "I'll see this game out and then retire."

But he can go on indefinitely. When Hollywood's Last Trump sounds, Ronald will probably be the trumpeter. And quite appropriately, for did he not appear as a black-faced herald in a Lena Ashwell repertory company?—what might be described as heralding the darkness before the dawn of that dazzling career that began with "The White Sister".

There are actors *and* actors, as all the world knows. When "talkies" suddenly swept the film people off their feet, His Master's Voice Gramophone Company thought they might just as well have a finger in the pie. They concluded it would be a fine idea to make a picture of Beethoven's life, with that eminent pianist, Mark Hambourg, in the title rôle. In conjunction with Herbert Wilcox, a picture would be produced which would show Hollywood just precisely where it got off.

Mark, nothing if not obliging, consented to portray the famous composer and, what is more, agreed to go down to Elstree preliminarily for a photograph test.

This proved satisfactory enough, whereupon one of the bright-minded gentlemen present suggested they might just as well ascertain whether Mark really could play the piano!

Mark blenched a trifle at this heresy; however, being a good-natured man, he shrugged his shoulders and said: "Very well, bring me a piano"—just as though he were ordering a whisky and soda.

This was an unforeseen difficulty; much scouring of the studios was necessary before a dilapidated old upright grand could be unearthed.

It was pushed into the room, when Mark put the cat among the pigeons once more by demanding a stool. They hadn't got such a thing. Someone offered a chair. It was too low. Willing hands brought cushions and telephone books. Mark sat down. From beneath those supple and beautiful hands of his came the strains of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata".

Everything was O.K. for sound. The Sonata went on and on and on; the cameraman yelled out that he was running short of film. Wilcox shouted into Mark's ears that they had heard enough. Mark took no notice.

The camera stopped working altogether; Mark suddenly realized the position. He got off his chair and exclaimed: "Ha! you wanted me to stop! You would not wait for the chorus!"

One regrets to add, by way of a postscript, that this masterpiece never saw the light of day. However, Mark was paid and ever afterwards regarded his first essay into films with the greatest satisfaction.

There blew into Payne's office one day four of the largest men in England—the famous McLaglen brothers, and only part of them at that. They, too, had ideas that they might be an acquisition to a film producer.

So they would, if anyone could have found a subject written around four modern Hercules. The biggest of the bunch was the eldest brother, Victor, who had been a Provost-Marshall in Baghdad during the war, and also a bit of a scrapper. At any rate, if a well-punched nose was any criterion, Victor had been taking on the champions. Payne asked him about it.

"Well, yes," he said with that infectious grin that makes him so popular, "when I came out of the army I thought there was easy money in the game. But the 'pros,'" he added ruefully, "are a bit too hot for me."

"Now," said Payne, "about this picture business. I presume you've never done any' acting?"

"I can learn," he replied to that. "What about my brothers?"

"One at a time," said Payne.

He got Victor, whose personality, apart from his physique, was tremendous, into one or two small parts where fighting

was necessary. He was excellent, made for the screen, though the gentlemen he threw around were wont to complain.

Then, at £10 10s. a day, the highest fee that had come his way so far, he got into "The Glorious Adventure", a film in colour—about the first of its kind ever made in England—produced by Stuart Blackton. Lady Diana Manners, now Lady Diana Duff Cooper, and Alice Crawford, the wife of Valentine Williams, the novelist, were also taking part. Lady Diana, among other things, discovered that film-making wasn't exactly drawing-room in its methods.

"The Glorious Adventure" was a picture about the Restoration, everybody in lace and ruffles, gallant cavaliers and quite a number of dirty dogs getting their throats slit, Victor being fine at this work.

But it proved a glorious adventure in more senses of the word than one. The culminating scene was the Great Fire of London. The wind changed at the psychological moment; instead of Old London going up in flames as required, the wind swept the carefully-laid blaze on to the ladies' dressing-rooms, with the result that Lady Diana and Alice Crawford hastily ran for their lives.

Victor McLaglen's career on the screen is a diverting one, and goes to prove what a man, or a woman, may achieve with the necessary grit. He went to Hollywood "on spec", doggedly determined to succeed. What he realized was that action, and not necessarily acting, can carry a man a long way in pictures.

Everybody liked him in Hollywood; directors and producers went out of their way to help him, and in course of time his acting improved beyond all recognition. One film after another revealed the headway he was making, and a few years ago, in "The Informer", Liam O'Flaherty's Sinn Fein story, Victor gave a representation of Ireland under the terror which won him the Hollywood award for the best acting of the year.

Robert Donat could have gone to the big Ufa Studio at Neubabelsberg, Germany, a year or two before the war. But he refused a most tempting offer, with the remark that there was plenty of time for pictures. He meant to be the architect of his own career and his first picture to attract the critics

was "The Private Life of Henry VIII", which produced more budding stars than any other British film ever known.

This brought him a Hollywood contract to play lead in the "Count of Monte Cristo", strong stuff for a youngster. He did not stay there, despite the temptations thrust in his way. It was back to the Homeland for him, to appear with Madeleine Carroll in "The Thirty-Nine Steps", after which, another success, "The Ghost Goes West", put the Hollywood people on his tracks with another big contract. No, he stayed here, to make "Knight Without Armour" under Alexander Korda, playing opposite Marlene Dietrich.

Where was all this leading to? "The Citadel", to be made in England by the Metro-Goldwyn Mayer Corporation, with Rosalind Russell, and, incidentally, one of the biggest fees ever paid to a British artist. As an example of dramatic art, it has rarely been surpassed; nobody who has seen that poignant spectacle of the Welsh mining village when Donat, as the doctor, was blowing breath into the lungs of the newborn baby will ever forget it.

Then came "Good-bye, Mr. Chips" to establish him still more firmly on fame's path, with "The Young Mr. Pitt" to consolidate his immense reputation.

Donat is wise in his generation. He realizes that an actor's real forte is the "legitimate", that it pays him to make films a subsidiary to theatrical renown. It was not many men who could have decided, after the furore created by "The Citadel", to play a season of Shakespearian repertory at the "Old Vic".

Laurence Olivier went over to Neubabelsberg, much to the amazement of the Germans, who couldn't believe this handsome young actor was a polished exponent of the Immortal Bard. He was on the salary list at £80 a week and his last great picture, "Lady Hamilton", has put him in a position from which he can contemplate the world with equanimity. Olivier has great distinctiveness; in aesthetic parts, he and the late Leslie Howard were in a class by themselves.

Fully twenty years before, Howard had the ambition of being his own producer. In collaboration with Sir Nigel Playfair, A. A. Milne the playwright and one or two other people, he formed a small company called Minerva Films which, like so many more British ventures in the film world,

possessed the fatal failing of having no real capital. Howard had just thrown up his career in a London bank. Delicate-looking to a degree, but nevertheless deceptively tough, he struggled along for a few years in London without making any headway. But he, too, had intense determination. After making a name for himself on Broadway, he migrated to Hollywood, where he was teamed with beautiful Norma Shearer in "*'Smilin' Through'*". With "*Romeo and Juliet*" his fame became world-wide.

He then achieved his dream of being a producer and but for his lamentable death, when the Germans shot down the Lisbon passenger plane in which he was travelling, it would have been interesting to see whether, like Charles Laughton, he would have discovered that the commercial side of the profession has its own peculiar difficulties.

One morning, a few years ago, I went up to Hampstead Heath to have a talk with a British film actor I have always greatly admired—Clive Brook. He lived in a beautiful old Queen Anne House overlooking the Heath and told me how he came to be a Hollywood star.

He was playing in Paris when a cablegram reached him from America saying:

"Offer ten thousand dollars six months contract conditional catch steamer leaving Cherbourg four to-morrow. Cable reply."

In the ordinary course of events, he would have jumped at the offer. But "four o'clock to-morrow"! The message had reached him in the middle of a film which was being partly "shot" at the famous Folies Bergère theatre.

Worse still, it had arrived at midnight and his company, which was making use of the Folies' beauty chorus for some of their scenes—after the regular show was concluded—were working overtime in more senses of the word than one.

What should he do? Regretfully decline the offer, or appeal to the sporting instincts of his producer? There is a fine camaraderie among stage folk in these matters, what might be termed an unwritten law that no obstacles shall be placed in the way of the man or woman whose big chance has come.

Clive showed the message to the producer and asked his advice. "Take it, of course. I'd jump at it myself."

"What about finishing the picture?"

"We'll get through all you've got to do in a couple of hours," was the sporting answer. "Come on, get busy."

Clive performed miracles. First of all he telegraphed his wife in England to store all their furniture, explaining what had happened, then to travel down to Southampton with their young daughter. He would be in the *Île de France* which stopped in Southampton Water to pick up English passengers.

The filming at the Folies Bergère was concluded; Clive, for whom the day was only just beginning, hastened back to his hotel, packed his clothes, and then snatched a hasty breakfast. Following that, he rushed along to the telegraph office and sent a telegram to Hollywood saying: "Leaving to-day, Clive Brook." From there it was on to the steamship offices to book three passages to New York, and also to discover that the boat-train for Cherbourg left at eleven-thirty a.m.

Still breathless, he did a little necessary shopping in Paris and at half-past eleven, when the train pulled out of the station, crowded with rich Americans returning to their native land, he had the consolation of knowing that he was catching that tide in the affairs of man which is said to lead on to fortune.

Ashore in the tender at Southampton to greet a highly-bewildered Mrs. Clive Brook, back to the ship, and thence across the Atlantic to the Mecca of the Movies.

New York duly loomed up; Clive wasted no time in sightseeing. That very same evening he and his family were in a west-bound train, with the prospect of spending three nights in it before the three thousand miles to California could be covered.

He had not altogether recovered his breath when he arrived on Hollywood station, to find someone from the studios anxiously seeking him. Only ten days had elapsed since leaving Paris, but apparently the picture he was to make, "Christine of the Hungry Heart", was being held up for him.

"Come on, Mr. Brook," said the studio man. "I'll run

over the story on the way down to the studio. There's a car waiting for you outside."

"American hustle if you like," said Clive to his wife.

"You don't mind, I suppose," he inquired mildly, "if I dispose of my wife and child first. Drive me to a decent hotel, there's a good chap."

"Why, certainly, Mr. Brook."

They whizzed along Hollywood's boulevards to some huge caravanserai which catered for visiting film stars; the studio man rushed in and engaged a suite for the Brooks. Clive bade his wife and daughter a fond and fleeting farewell, uncertain, in this fast-moving country, whether he would ever see them again.

He found himself in the car again—still whizzing. They sped along still more boulevards and eventually did another dash through the closely-guarded gates of an imposing studio.

More functionaries were on hand to greet the newcomer. One of them, still at breakneck speed, pushed Clive into a dressing-room, showed him a lot of make-up, and adjured him, if he ever wanted to see England, home and beauty again, to make it snappy. Everybody on the set was waiting for him. He heard that he was playing opposite the famous Florence Vidor.

No script; the producer would shout out his lines as he went along. Clive was beginning to grow dazed; he dabbed some make-up on his face and was led, like a lamb to the slaughter, where a horde of actors and actresses, cameramen and producers and assistant-producers, were looking for him with a heart hungrier than Christine's.

Miss Vidor gave him brief but cordial greeting; the producer yelled out "Lights, Mr. Brook; walk slowly towards Miss Vidor as though you were welcoming an old friend."

Cameras clicked; Clive obeyed orders and played his part so smoothly that he might have studied it a month. A satisfied producer said: "O.K. you're fine," and Clive, at a more leisurely speed this time, returned to his hotel.

Let it not be thought, however, with all this palpitating hurry, that Clive came back to England in similar fashion. Far from it; "Christine of the Hungry Heart" duly made her appearance in public and Clive made a couple more pictures for the company. His six months' contract was up, but

instead of going home, the company said: "You're not leaving us just yet, Mr. Brook."

His stay, in fact, was one of the longest on record, another ten and a half years! It was said of Clive, doubtless in jest, that he was the Englishman who taught the American actor how to enter a room without tripping over the mat. However, I don't vouch for this libellous statement.

Anyhow, he remained in Hollywood altogether a matter of eleven years, becoming even more valuable to the movie magnates when the "talkies" made the good English-speaking actor quite indispensable. In "*East Lynne*", "*Scandal Sheet*", "*The Lawyer's Secret*", "*Tarnished Lady*" and "*Silence*" he quickly consolidated the favourable impression he had first made in the States. But I dare say he will agree, and all the world as well, that the finest picture he ever made was "*Cavalcade*" with Diana Wynyard.

"*Calvacade*" is one of the landmarks in the history of moving pictures. It made a fortune when produced as a play at Drury Lane and brought Noel Coward, I dare say, more money than he has made out of any of his other plays. There was some slight doubt whether all its pomp and colour would be equally successful on the screen, not to mention its purely English appeal. However, it got across to the public, so beautifully and sincerely was it acted, better than any other English picture has ever done. Its popularity was universal.

Wilfrid Lawson is one of the greatest actors in England, and his career goes to prove that hard work, unlimited experience, and indomitable perseverance, are the main assets for success on the stage and screen.

He comes from Bradford and, unlike most men who take to the stage, he had made up his mind to be an actor from his earliest days. At the ripe old age of sixteen he was playing in "*Trilby*" at the Palace Pier Theatre, Brighton. However, there was pretty good stuff in him even at this period; which was at the beginning of the last war. He soon realized that over in France something more serious than play-acting was taking place. He became a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps and did not return to the stage until demobilization.

Then he set about the business properly. Up and down the country he toured; I believe he has to his credit the better part of four hundred different rôles! Can you beat that for versatility?

Sad to relate, however, Wilfrid could not strike oil. Everywhere he went there were marvellous press notices. But most of the plays were what is vulgarly called "flops"; they ran but three or four nights, and so Wilfrid had to seek fame anew.

He played in a film made by the Gaumont Company which depicted "East Lynne" being acted by soldiers in the trenches. John Payne happened to catch sight of it and was strongly impressed by Lawson's ability. The next time Lawson was in town, playing in "The Barretts of Wimpole Street", he made it his business to go and see him.

"This," he said to himself, "is an actor."

He asked Lawson to come and see him. He astounded Payne by his appearance; anything more different from the man whom he had seen in "The Barretts" it was impossible to imagine. On the stage his make-up had been a masterpiece; it would have defied anyone in the world to have recognized him in the street.

"Films?" he modestly replied to Payne's query. "Yes, if anyone wants me."

So he was introduced to Warner Brothers, who gave him a small part, that of a crook, in a Teddington picture in which he acted the leading man off the screen. Then he went into "Turn of the Tide" and the critics really began to take notice.

The inevitable Hollywood contract made its appearance. Fox Brothers signed him up and he could be counted as lost to the English stage, as well as to pictures. But Wilfrid didn't like Hollywood.

"I found myself on the set one day," he related to Payne afterwards, "sitting between two *very* famous actresses, whose names had better be suppressed. For the better part of an hour they just talked across me. I might have been dead for all the notice they took of me."

In a film agency you have to be prepared to supply anything, from the proverbial pin to an elephant. A producer

may suddenly demand eight bald-headed men; you turn up your books and find there are quite a number of hairless gentlemen prepared to let out their bald pates for a consideration. Six men with beards—equally simple.

But one request that made Payne scratch his head was a peremptory demand for a pickpocket, and the real Mackay at that. Amateurs and stage pickpockets were completely taboo.

It was for a sporting picture and after weighing up the possibilities, the jovial John hied himself into Vine Street police station. The station sergeant said: "Yes, sir, what can I do for you?"

"I'm looking for a pickpocket," replied Payne.

"What's the matter? Lost your wallet?"

"No, Sergeant," (very civilly) "I want a real, live pickpocket to play in a film"—going on to explain most meticulously, in case he might be locked up, all about the picture.

Scotland Yard didn't like the idea at all. "What do you think this place is?" demanded the officer. "A Fred Karno show!"

Payne pleaded, strongly enough for the sergeant to go into the C.I.D. office and come back with a detective, who also had doubts about his sanity.

"Well," said the latter, eyeing him up and down, "I suppose it's all right. You'd better go along to the So-and-So café in Old Compton Street, see the proprietor, and tell him what you want. And don't blame me if you get hurt."

Payne walked over into Soho and found the café. It was full of sinister-looking gentlemen who seemed rather annoyed at his coming. Scowls to the right, scowls to the left. He took the proprietor aside and made his wishes known, with a couple of pounds, which at any rate didn't seem like the Yard.

"Pickpockets, Mr. Payne? Why, yes, there's a dozen good dips outside. Which one do you fancy?"

Payne went out and inspected the collection. He was insistent that he must have one with the necessary sneaky air. The proprietor recommended a certain gentleman who came from Hoxton. "One of the best dips in London," he added warmly. He looked it.

Payne questioned the candidate; he liked the idea of being

paid to pick pockets without fear of being "pinched", and as proof of his ability, mentioned that he had done six stretches for what he described as "whizzing". Payne engaged him on the spot for £5, half down, the remainder on completion of his task. "And no tricks, mind," he added.

"Good Gawd, guv'nor," was the answer to that, "don't you think I know a b—— gentleman when I see one?"

He duly arrived on the set; everybody buttoned up their pockets. The scene, that of a crowd milling around on a racecourse, was ready. One of the leading actors strolled on and the pickpocket was supposed to get to work.

The camera stopped turning and an angry producer yelled out to the "dip": "Here, when the devil are you going to pick that pocket?"

Wounded pride made its appearance on the poor fellow's face. He pulled a watch out of his pants pocket—the actor's watch—and in a voice righteous with indignation cried out: "Guv'nor, d'ye think I've been at this game twenty years and 'aven't learnt 'ow to snatch a kettle?"

He took a bit of smoothing down. The flabbergasted producer had to explain that he must pick the actor's pocket so that an audience could see it done.

Disgustedly, as one upon whom shame had descended, he went through the scene again. He seemed to think, and no doubt he was right, that it was a wicked waste of good talent.

One will never know how many fortunes have been frittered away trying to make English films pay. The path of the picture world is just bestrewn with derelict companies which have lost a couple of hundred thousand pounds, put up by some optimist unable to realize that half the battle is finding the market for the pictures once they are produced.

There is a tied-house system in the cinema trade, just as much as there is in beer. The quota system has achieved nothing, and never will until British films can stand properly on their own feet. English artists never took kindly to the haphazard ways that marked the early days of the industry and one must admit, even now, that actors and actresses at the top of their profession don't readily knuckle down to being ordered hither and thither by some perspiring pro-

ducer sadly unmindful of the fact that a great star of the theatrical firmament may still be a lady or a gentleman.

All this is the heritage of a generation ago, when film studios in this country were anathema to the people who lived for their art and not for their pockets.

"Pictures!" they would exclaim contemptuously. "Who wants to go into pictures?"

You couldn't in the least blame them. John Payne told me that he often shuddered as he recalled the "good old days", the incredible make-shifts, the interminable waiting about in dirty, draughty buildings, the poor remuneration. Barnstorming wasn't the word for it. Still, these days had their humorous interludes.

One fine day his telephone bell rang and a very angry voice, that of an Elstree director, yelled out: "Get into a car and come down here at once. We're having a nice lot of trouble."

"What's the matter?"

"Matter! That—— crowd of yours has pinched off the set every blasted thing worth a cent."

This was serious. Payne had sent a "crowd" for an "At Home" scene, one of those lavishly-mounted affairs that made impressionable young ladies sigh for a life on the silvery screen.

Quickly, therefore, he was on the spot, to find the crowd locked in the studio and in the process of being searched. What a sight! Silver cigarette cases and boxes, photo frames, ornaments were all slowly coming to light.

Were the offenders abashed? Not a bit of it; they merely excused themselves with the old adage of charity and the multitude of sins.

From time to time various well-meaning people have been imbued with a desire to make film "crowds" happier, a most laudable idea. It was thought that they should be given better food at the studios. The head of Bramlins had often catered for them himself, and his motto was: "Plain food and plenty of it."

However, other people had other plans. A big film was in production at Elstree and the good-hearted folk behind it, without informing Payne, gave an order to one of the most fashionable firms in London for a banquet. All the crowd, as

well as the stars, were to sit down to a real slap-up spread.

"Up I came," said Payne, "with my little lot, as the classical old ditty ran, just as the feast began. It was comical, and pathetic." His hungry "crowd" had knives to the right of them, forks to the left of them, spoons all round 'em. Into that valley of cutlery rode the six hundred, and the Charge of the Light Brigade at the battle of Balaclava was as nothing to the mess they were in trying to find the right weapons for the hors d'œuvres, soup, fish, entrée and roast that came with machine-like precision.

Some of them grew hungrier still waiting for the courses, which the evening-dressed waiters served up. At any rate, they demolished Payne's little lot, as well as the banquet.

Every film agent encounters those beautiful, but badly-spoilt ladies who are advised by well-meaning friends to go into pictures. Unlike Hollywood, which is nothing more than a gigantic film factory and no nonsense, the British picture industry was, for a long time, a sort of Tom Tiddler's ground for the blasé beauties of Mayfair.

Along they would come, when there would be a dialogue on these lines:

"Let me see, have you ever done any film acting?"

"No-o-o, but I'm awfully good at amateur theatricals."

"It isn't quite so easy as you imagine. What would you say to doing a little crowd work, just for experience?"

"Well, I don't mind it once. But, of course, you'll find me a part as soon as you can, won't you?"

"Of course, Miss D—."

Once, and only once, usually sufficed; they were never seen again. There was, for instance, the Hon. Mrs. G—. her real name had better be a secret—who was seized with movie madness. According to the flatterers, it would be a case of "I came, I saw, I conquered."

She arrived at Bramlins' offices in a Rolls-Royce, complete with chauffeur, secretary, and maid carrying a pekinese. The most they could offer her, unfortunately, was some crowd work at one guinea per diem.

She didn't want the guinea, naturally, and at the same time she couldn't let her friends down. With great condescension she took the regular agency card which per-

mitted her to go down to a studio at Walton-on-Thames to be one of the crowd. And she set off there in the Rolls-Royce. But she never came back.

Another Belle of Belgravia, as blue-blooded as they make 'em, wanted a small part. Said Payne's secretary: "Well, Miss So-and-So, we've got something that might give you a chance to show what you can do. It's a London street scene and you have to dance round a barrel-organ dressed up as a coster girl."

"Oh, I *couldn't* be common. What would my friends think?"

"I'm afraid that's all we've got just at present."

"Thank you; I'll look in again some other time."

But she, also, never did.

Hollywood, of course, makes the real stars. In this country it would be impossible to spend the vast sums of money they will lay out in America building up a big name for their leading artists. Most of the beginners who come into films have dreams of a Hollywood contract.

But they require luck, as well as outstanding ability, to succeed amidst the fierce competition that exists in sunny California. Dozens of men and women I have known have gone over there to become nothing more than the flotsam of the Hollywood boulevards.

Poor Herbert Mundin, who died there penniless, is an example. I knew him very well when he was making good money in London; his West-End theatrical work must have brought him a comfortable income. However, Hollywood called him; he did well enough for a time, but could hardly hope to be anything but a character comedian, to be used in some special part.

He worked along for several years, making frequent appearances, until he died from injuries in a motor accident, leaving behind him the memory of a kind-hearted little man who could never say "No" to an importunate friend.

At Kempton Park races one afternoon I was sitting in the Press box talking to Edgar Wallace. He looked wretchedly ill; his face was lead-coloured and you would have said, off-hand, that he had gone without any proper sleep for a month.

"I'm off to Hollywood in week," he informed me. "The change will do me good."

"What time did you get to bed last night?" I retorted.

"About half-past eleven."

"And what time did you get up?"

"About four."

What Wallace had done, and what he had been doing for a couple of years past, was to turn out millions of words at unnatural speed, merely to earn huge sums of money which he gambled away. He lost a fortune to bookmakers and another fortune trying to produce films himself. Anyhow, he went over to Hollywood with a £50,000 contract to write scenarios, only to discover on his arrival that *his* word was not exactly law. Bitter disillusionment confronted him everywhere; he submitted a dozen scenarios which were repudiated and eventually, as the world knows, he contracted pneumonia and died with tragic suddenness. Better by far for Edgar would it have been if he had remained at home. Only one of his stories ever saw production, a very bad picture entitled "King Kong".

They did not understand the characters of his brain in Hollywood. His cockneys made them yawn; his criminals were far too tame for people who visualized pistols in every scene. His humour—and Wallace could be exceedingly funny—made no appeal whatever to American tastes.

However, many another English writer has undergone a similar experience. P. G. Wodehouse, for example, failed to impress the Hollywood cynics. Numerous efforts have been made to get Bernard Shaw over there; his answer is that the mountain must come to Mahomet. I remember seeing Clive Brook in a Hollywood version of Sherlock Holmes. Poor Conan Doyle, never a lover of maudlin sentiment, would have turned in his grave at the sight of his famous creation making love to some completely superfluous female that the big "chiefs" had insisted upon, and at the presence of a small boy, who at every conceivable opportunity, would squawk: "Say, Mr. Holmes!"

Well, as Kipling puts it:

Never the lotos closes, never the wild-fowl wake,
But a soul goes out on the East Wind, that died for
England's sake.

Not to mention Hollywood.

Stars wax and wane; always the cry is for new faces, especially in the case of women. Most of the fair sex get a five years' contract, about the limit of their run these fast-moving days. To counteract this shrewd move, which usually means that they will be worked to death, the far-seeing ones bargain for no more than two or three films a year—à la Greta Garbo.

It's the old, old story of familiarity breeding contempt. A woman, of course, must cash in while her beauty lasts. Nothing looks more pathetic than to catch a fleeting glimpse of someone who has been world-famous in the past making a fugitive appearance in some small part, glad enough, no doubt, of the money. "Easy come, easy go" is all too true in film-land.

Hollywood is full of them, still clinging to the delusion that one day they will make a grand come-back. But, like the old boxers, they rarely do so. They get into "crowds", perhaps play an occasional small part, but can never hope to see the big money again.

British pictures have improved out of all recognition since the big Hollywood companies began to produce here. They set a standard which has put new life into the home-grown talent. Photography has undergone a revolution; the scenarios are a revelation when you think of the scrappy, disconnected stories that were deemed good enough. Staging and dressing, if not exactly on the lavish Hollywood scale, steadily improves, while the official mind slowly but surely accustoms itself to the idea that moving pictures may, after all, be of some slight importance in the world. But it has taken a war to bring about that minor revolution!

Heaven only knows that we also possess all the acting talent that any country requires for film production and for that we can largely thank patriotic artists like Robert Donat, Wilfrid Lawson, Laurence Olivier and his wife, Vivien Leigh. After all is said and done, a film play should be a mirror of the country it represents, and that can rarely be achieved except by the native-born players.

CHAPTER XVI

DRAMAS OF THE TURF

THESE reminiscences of mine would be incomplete without a chapter narrating a few stories of what is known as the Sport of Kings.

It is an indubitable fact that racing, boxing and soccer are the only three sports which make any appeal to the readers of the Sunday newspapers with the big circulations. Why this should be so is not difficult to fathom; they fairly riot with drama, comedy and colour.

Rich also are the characters you find there. You can walk on a racecourse and see more picturesque people than in any other place I know. Go to Epsom on Derby Day, to Ascot and Goodwood, and you will bump into half the notabilities of the land. The fortunes that have been won and lost! The famous horses that remain in your memory for evermore!

You can't beat the English Turf. I've been racing in Australia, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, even in Cuba, where they possess a very fine course run on American lines. Longchamps on Grand Prix day is a sight to remember, but it doesn't compare with Ascot. Flemington on Melbourne Cup Day takes some beating; but as a spectacle it must take a back seat in comparison with Epsom Downs when the Blue Riband of the racing world is down for decision.

As a racecourse pure and simple, nothing approaches Newmarket. It has an atmosphere all its own; even the turf itself seems to posses a greenness which you never see elsewhere.

In all my thirty-odd years of going to Epsom, there has never occurred a Derby to create such a commotion as that of 1913. It was one of those blazing days which so frequently herald the coming of the English summer. The rolling downs were smothered with that seething crowd which is to be seen at Epsom and nowhere else in the world, and hopes ran high that the screaming hot favourite, Craganour, would prove once and for all that the debatable verdict which had deprived him of the Two Thousand

Guineas at Newmarket five weeks previously was all wrong.

It had been many a long year in England since a judge's decision had caused such a public uproar as that at Newmarket when Mr. C. E. Robinson said that Mr. Walter Raphael's Louvois had beaten Mr. C. Bower Isinay's Craganour by a head in the Two Thousand. Dumbfounded is but a mild word to express the opinion. Willie Saxby, the jockey, thought he had won comfortably; the jockeys behind him believed he had won, and there was hardly a soul on the Stands, from the highly-experienced racing writers who rarely make a mistake, to the humblest patron of the Silver Ring, who did not give vociferous tongue to their disapproval when they saw the number of the twenty-five to one chance Louvois given the Two Thousand Guineas at the expense of three to one favourite Craganour. "Won by a head" said the number board.

Newmarket is without doubt a difficult course for a judge. It is the widest in England and many a jockey has been caught napping—or the judge has. However, the judge had the last word, and his reply to the uproar that took place, was: "You mean that Craganour *ought* to have won." Nothing could be done; the infuriated trainer, also, by a strange coincidence, named Robinson, had to choke his anger as best he could, while Louvois, ridden by the Franco-American jockey, Johnny Reiff, went down to posterity as the winner of the Two Thousand Guineas of 1913.

Here it may be advisable to say a word about the redoubtable Johnny, who was rather a thorn in the side of English jockeys. He came over from the United States in the late 'nineties with his brother Lester and about the hottest bunch that ever landed on England's long-suffering shores.

A regular retinue of them took up their residence—Duke and Wishard, both experts at the dope, a bunch of professional backers, notable among them Riley Grannan, Messrs. Gates ("Bet you a Million"), Drake and a horde of hangers-on. Tod Sloan also took part in the invasion, but under different auspices.

Johnny Reiff at the time was but a boy in knickerbockers, but he was amazingly successful and remained so until the

Jockey Club grew tired of the whole crowd. Doping was made illegal and shortly afterwards the English Turf said a grateful good-bye to them—not before Lester Reiff was warned off, however.

He could not ride in France, either; but Johnny could, and did so for a good many years, coming to England occasionally to ride for owners with international interests, like the banker, Walter Raphael.

Willie Saxby was in dire disgrace. The choleric Robinson, never popular among the jockeys at any time, "put him down", while the poor owner must have felt that misfortune dogged him wherever he went.

Mr. Ismay was one of the owners of the White Star Line, and it was only the year before that a certain amount of opprobrium had come his way when the crack new White Star liner *Titanic* had gone down after striking an iceberg off the American coast with the loss of 1300 lives. Mr. Ismay was on board for the maiden voyage, and had been one of the survivors. Stories were current, doubtless untrue, that other lives had been lost to save his.

He was not a man who courted publicity, nor, wealthy as he was, and lavishly as he raced, could he be accounted one of the favourite owners of the British public. But he had certainly been very successful, and had won many races under both rules.

Anyhow, poor Saxby was "fired", and went about with hardly an owner to put him up. But he had many sympathizers among his fellow-jockeys, few of whom held the trainer Robinson in much esteem.

Alas, that Saxby had made a thorough mess of the Two Thousand Guineas was conclusively proved three weeks later in the Newmarket Stakes, an important mile-and-a-quarter race which frequently reveals the winner of the Derby. Here Craganour and Louvois met again, at even weights, with the celebrated Danny Maher carrying the Neapolitan violet-and-primrose hoops of Mr. Ismay. Over the extra quarter of a mile Craganour won comfortably, with Louvois beaten off into third place.

Saxby, then, had cooked his goose properly: Nevertheless the result of the Newmarket Stakes did not assuage the

frequently-expressed opinions of his fellow-jockeys that he had been given a raw deal. One and all said that he had *not* thrown the Two Thousand Guineas away; he had merely been robbed of the race. However, neither the trainer nor the owner would consider him for the Derby. Tentatively it was arranged that Danny Maher should ride Craganour, provided that the late Lord Rosebery, who had first claim on his services, did not want him for his filly Prue. But at the last moment his lordship decided to run Prue in the Derby, so Mr. Ismay was confronted with the problem of finding a jockey for Craganour—almost on the eve of the race.

Who should it be? In desperation, having regard to all the under-currents, Mr. Ismay bethought himself, or his trainer did, of bringing over from France the rider who had beaten them in the Two Thousand Guineas, Johnny Reiff.

In many ways it was a foolish decision because of the high feeling over the way Saxby had been treated. Nor did Saxby himself omit to vent his grievance. That year in particular three Franco-American jockeys had already been retained for the English Derby—Milton Henry, George Bellhouse, and George Stern. Johnny Reiff was engaged, at a fancy fee, and there were a good many people who smelt trouble, of the sort that frequently overtakes English jockeys riding in the Grand Prix.

Derby Day dawned and Craganour was favourite at six to four against, with Mr. Hulton's chestnut colt Shogun second in demand at six to one. There were fifteen runners, and a nice lot they were, with the perky little Craganour, a lightish bay, very much on his toes. One might describe him as a doubtful-tempered animal, a failing probably inherited from his Irish sire Desmond, whose stock were so well-known for their uncertain tempers.

With that mighty roar of "Off" from a hundred thousand throats, always to be heard at Epsom, the field got away to a good start, with the outsider Aldegonde making the running for half a mile. Then Aboyeur, in the white jacket and black seams of Mr. A. P. Cunliffe, took the lead, hotly pursued by Craganour. Coming down to Tattenham Corner, Aboyeur was still in front with Craganour and Day Comet close at hand, with Shogun already shut in and unlikely, short of a miracle, to get through.

Louder and louder grew the noise as it seemed that Aboyeur, a hundred to one chance, would beat the hot favourite. Up came the whips. A quarter of a mile from the winning post there were but three in it, Craganour, Great Sport and Aboyeur. Johnny Reiff was sandwiched between the two. Whips were flying and the trio were so closely packed together that one could almost hear the bumping as they thundered towards the post.

The three horses had edged out towards the centre of the course. Over on the rails Louvois, Shogun and Day Comet, only a length or two behind, were also under heavy punishment. And so they flashed by so close together that it might almost have been a triple dead-heat, with Louvois to make it a possible dead-heat of four.

Breathless silence obtained for fully a minute as the numbers were slowly hoisted into the frame. Then it was seen that Craganour had won by a head, with Aboyeur second and Louvis third. A sigh of relief from the vast crowd went up, and the bookmakers began to count their losses. Nobody dreamed of the drama that would soon be staged.

Craganour, sweating badly, was ridden back to the unsaddling enclosure and his red-faced trainer, now all smiles, was a sight to behold. He had achieved the long-standing ambition of his adventurous life. The jockeys of the three placed horses undid their girths and went inside to weigh in. Everybody regarded the race as over.

But there was an inexplicable delay in calling the "All right". Something had gone wrong. Visions of an objection flashed across Robinson's mind; he walked into the weighing room to discover that the jockeys of the three placed horses had all been called before the Stewards.

Five minutes passed by, and a voice uttered the words that were music to the ears of Craganour's trainer: "All right". But suddenly Lord Durham, the Senior Steward of the Jockey Club, came out and cried: "Who called the 'All right'? Leave those horses there."

Mr. Ismay, the centre of innumerable congratulatory friends, and his trainer as well, could hardly believe their ears. Buzzing excitement took the place of comparative calm; not a soul seemed to know what was actually happen-

ing. The number board gave no indication that the winner had been objected to.

Not that any surprise would have been occasioned by an objection for bumping and boring. The ill-feeling rampant before the race was well known, and if the riders of both the second and third horses had objected to Craganour, there was ample reason.

Ten long, agonizing minutes, which must have been purgatory for Mr. Ismay and his trainer, dragged along. They were then called into the Stewards' room, where they learnt to their dismay that the Stewards themselves had disqualified the winner. Lord Durham (the third carl) said that Craganour had jostled the second horse, Aboyeur, and also that he had interfered with Shogun and Day Comet. All the jockeys in the race had been interviewed; apparently the Stewards were of the opinion that Johnny Reiff was the main offender.

So, to the bewilderment of a hundred thousand people, Craganour's number was taken down from the board, and that of Aboyeur substituted. The hundred to one chance had won a race that no one, not even his phlegmatic owner, ever anticipated his winning.

Coming on top of the tragedy of the Two Thousand Guineas, it convinced Mr. Ismay that he was the victim of a vendetta. Some little time afterwards he announced that all his horses would be sold. Craganour went to the Argentine for the handsome sum of 30,000 guineas, while the lucky owner of Aboyeur, doubtless shaking hands with himself, sold his Derby winner to Russia for 13,000 guineas.

All the parties concerned in this amazing affair are now dead, with the exception of Johnny Reiff and one or two of the jockeys. After this passage of time, it is permissible to ask if a gross injustice was not done to Mr. Ismay. Who can doubt that it was a case of six of one and half a dozen of the other? Craganour, on all form, was surely entitled to win the Derby of 1913, and there is no question that his jockey was given a very rough passage. I am not sure that Reiff ever rode in England again; he may have concluded that he was none too popular. The Stewards themselves kept silent; they made no public announcement as to what had transpired, as they might well have done.

Walking aimlessly around the racecourses of England and France you could run across dozens of men who had made fortunes on the Turf, and dissipated them with a foolishness which is well-nigh incredible when you consider how difficult it is to make money racing.

Was there ever a more poignant instance than poor Tod Sloan, who died in California a few years ago at the age of sixty-one? Tod had come down to working as a bar-tender, glad of a few dollars a week, and pathetically eager to talk about those marvellous days when he was the most discussed jockey in the world.

For a good many years I used to meet Tod in the South of France. He would go down to Nice for the winter jumping, hanging around the racecourses there looking for acquaintances to whom he might tip a winner or two. It seemed hard to believe that this tubby little man, not five feet tall, could be the once-famous Tod, the friend of the Prince of Wales, and everybody else who mattered on the English racecourse.

"What are you doing for a living these days?" I asked him the last time we met. He seemed none too prosperous, and there was a hungry gleam in his eyes as he asked me where I was staying. If it had been the Ruhl or the Negresco, the two most expensive hotels in Nice, I dare say he would have borrowed a couple of *mille*. I told him the Continental was my hotel, at which he nodded understandingly, and then told me to back a horse for the next race. I thanked him, and then, as I was going off, he asked me if I had 500 francs about me that I didn't particularly want.

"I suppose so," I said resignedly. It wasn't the first time.

I saw him wandering around all the afternoon, occasionally talking to the jockeys, but more often picking out one of the English racing fraternity, and telling them, I have no doubt, much the same tale.

Curiosity made me stop him once more and ask him how much money he had had through his hands during those hectic and glorious years when he could do no wrong.'

"Wa'al," he drawled out slowly, "if you said anything short of a million pounds, you wouldn't be far out. In 1899 I passed over £300,000 through my banking account."

"Tod," I replied to that, "it's about time you went back to the place where you were born and bred. There's nothing for you here."

"Yep," he said, "and what shall I do when I reach the States? Most of the crowd I knew are dead and gone, just as they are in France and England. Old Pittsburg Phil has gone out, and one of my greatest pals, Riley Grannan, who used to bet more money in an afternoon when he was racing in England than anybody I knew, threw his hand in a couple of years ago. He died broke."

In 1898, 1899, and for the greater part of 1900, Tod's life in England was a case of roses all the way, with only a few thorns. It seemed that he could do no wrong; this American crouch of his, and the amazing aptitude he displayed in getting what he called the "wind-break", began to make the old-fashioned English jockeys look silly. Mornington Cannon and the Loates brothers, who had been cocks o' the walk for so many years, had to take a back seat.

One could write a book about the humorous side of Tod's life in England. He was an inordinately vain little man, terribly fond of getting himself up in evening dress. He kept a suite at the Hotel Cecil, gave expensive dinner parties, all the time gambling like a lunatic. On the first occasion that Lord William Beresford presented him to the Prince of Wales, and the Duke of York (King George V) at Newmarket, Tod didn't bother taking his cap off, as all well-behaved people do with royalty.

* The Prince and the Duke shook hands with him, and then bade him a friendly farewell. Said Lord William: "Tod, why the devil didn't you take your cap off?"

"Why should I?" retorted Tod. "I'd have had to go over to the dressing room and do my hair again."

Vastly proud of his sleek black hair was Tod; if it came to that, he always looked as though he had just been turned out of a band-box. All the owners in England were after him; he frequently rode four and five winners a day, and what was more, backed them. He literally stole the rich Middle Park Plate from the Duke of Westminster's crack Flying Fox on a bad horse called Caiman, with poor Mornington Cannon being blamed for riding one of the worst races of his career. Everybody had it afterwards that Caiman was a champion,

to which Tod replied: "Let *me* ride Flying Fox, over the same distance, and I'll bet you £10,000 I beat Caiman a dozen lengths."

Tod was a genius in dealing with temperamental horses; if he had possessed the sense, or some obliging friend had told him, that his own temperament fairly shrieked for drastic curbing, all might have been well with him.

M. Ephrussi, a well-known French owner, offered Tod a fancy fee to ride his Codoman in Prix du Conseil Municipal. Tod won the race comfortably, and then, learning that the horse was entered for the Cambridgeshire, suggested that he be sent over, with the stipulation that he should have the care of the animal for a week before the race.

Here, though Tod did not realize it, was the cause of his undoing. Codoman, in his opinion, looked a cast-iron certainty for the Cambridgeshire, and when M. Ephrussi gave his consent to the venture, Tod bethought himself of the fortune that was his. He had a great friend in Paris in those days, the American Copper millionaire, Frank Gardner. Tod went into conference with him and Gardner, just as eager as he was to clean up another fortune, agreed to back Codoman to win £250,000.

Those were the palmy days on the English Turf, when real bookmakers were about, and thirty-three to one on offer against the French horse, whom nobody thought would run. Tod arranged with Gardner that he should have the odds to £2,000, in other words, that he would win £66,000 if Codoman won the Cambridgeshire of 1900, as seemed highly likely.

All went well for a time. Codoman arrived in England, and so did an Irish horse called Berrill, trained at The Curragh by Phillip Behan, who afterwards became the father-in-law of Stephen Donoghue. Tod began to hear things, to the effect that Berrill, with seven stone nine pounds, was a handicap certainty.

This do-or-die gamble looked like coming unstuck. Tod took counsel with some of his undesirable associates, men who would stick at nothing, and the result of their cogitations was that Berrill should be "got at" in some form or another. A few discreet inquiries warned them of the danger of approaching either the trainer, or the jockey, John Thomp-

son. So it went on until a day or two before the race, when Berrill arrived at Newmarket.

That very same night an attempt was made to nobble the horse. Two desperadoes, promised £500 if Berrill was successfully dealt with, crept into the stable yard at midnight and prowled around trying to find the Irish horse. They didn't succeed; what they did come across was a big stableman with a hay-fork who challenged them from a dark corner and chased them right away into the town until they were lost.

Nothing remained, then, short of a miracle, but the race itself. It can be described in very few words. Berrill made all the running, hopelessly pursued by Codoman, and won in a canter by three lengths.

However, the final act had yet to be played. As the placed horses were being ridden into the weighing enclosure, Tod, on slipping down from his horse, called out to Thompson on his way into the weighing room: "You Irish So-and-so, if it hadn't been for you, I'd have won a fortune," and a few other sanguinary epithets which need not be repeated here.

Thompson kept silent; a few people who heard the somewhat obscene language, merely laughed. Unluckily for Tod, one of the Stewards of the Jockey Club also heard what had been uttered. When he got inside, he was called before the Stewards, to whom he denied his offence pointblank.

The Stewards said nothing at that time, but when Tod got back to London that night he began to hear a few things from his friends and mentor, Lord William Beresford. Tod wouldn't believe that he was in serious trouble. Lord William said he had better take no more rides for the remainder of the season.

"Take a trip back to the States, little man," said the kindly Lord William. "Maybe by next year the trouble will have blown over."

Tod wisely accepted the advice. But when he returned the following spring, he met blank resistance everywhere. Lord William said it was no use applying for a licence just then, and Tod hung about all the year hoping that the Stewards would relent. Alas, they never did. He drifted over to France, then to Belgium, backwards and forwards to his native land. And so the years went on. Tod grew stout; he

opened bars in Paris, and then finally lost all he had, finishing up, as I say, as a bar-tender in California.

Almost as big a tragedy in its way as the downfall of Tod Sloan, was the case of the Irish trainer, Jack Fallon, who came over to England from the Emerald Isle, much about the same time, the late 'nineties.

Fallon, again, I knew extremely well. I wrote his story for one of my papers, and a very entertaining one it was, though in talking to him one could hardly help realizing that he must have owed the astounding good fortune that came his way to the shrewd-headed gentlemen who really controlled his stables.

The racing world began to sit up and take notice of Jack Fallon in the early part of the present century when he was installed at Druid's Lodge, a lonely racing establishment set right in the middle of Salisbury Plain.

Druid's Lodge had a bit of a history; it was originally owned by a couple of gentlemen known respectively as Guts and Gaiters. In addition to training a few horses at Druid's Lodge, they also had a public house there. However, time had gone on its way and Druid's Lodge had been semi-abandoned for many a long year when two of the most astute men on the English Turf, Mr. A. P. Cunliffe and the late Mr. W. B. Purefoy, took possession, having at the back of their minds that here was the ideal training establishment, with wonderful gallops, and beautifully secure from the prying eyes of the pestiferous tout, the bane of all trainers.

The man they picked upon for a trainer was young Jack Fallon, a "broth of a boy" with horses. First of all, they fitted the lodge up regardless of expense, picked upon a jockey just coming to the front, another young Irishman in the shape of Bernard Dillon, and gathered around them a few owners whom they could trust.

First, and most formidable among this combination intent upon raiding the bookmakers, was the inimitable "Pure", as everybody called Mr. W. B. Purefoy. "Pure", once seen, could hardly be forgotten. He was a spare, sharp-featured man, with a pair of intensely keen grey eyes, and an uncanny knowledge of the Turf. His principal companion in arms, Mr. A. P. Cunliffe, was the brother of the late Lord Cunliffe.

It was a bad look-out for the poor layers! Among the owners were Captain J. H. Forester, Mr. E. A. Wigan, and the Dublin veterinary surgeon, Mr. J. H. Peard. One might describe Druid's Lodge as a water-tight, self-contained compartment well-equipped to give the bookmakers electric shocks.

The first big coup that came their way was in the year 1903 in the Kempton Park Jubilee Stakes with the American-bred Ypsilanti, a seemingly unsound horse that the clever Fallon picked up out of a selling race twelve months previously. Later on in the season, in the Cambridgeshire Stakes, they gave the Ring a trouncing which made Turf history.

This was in the race won by the three-year-old filly, Hackler's Pride, bought in Ireland the year before, and "laid out" to win a race where the Druid's Lodge brigade could bet to their heart's content. An obliging handicapper let the animal into the race with six stone ten pounds and with young Jack Jarvis on her back she cantered home. Her connections cleaned up close on £250,000, of which Fallon himself won something like £30,000.

One would never have thought that the feat could be repeated the following year; yet, repeated it was, though to be sure this time Hackler's Pride carried eight stone ten pounds.

Druid's Lodge was now anathema to the bookmakers, for had not Ypsilanti won the Jubilee again the same year. *Coup* after *coup* was pulled off; on one noteworthy Bank Holiday meeting at Hurst Park, Fallon won five of the six races, just getting beaten in the last. He was walking off the course when he ran into the Australian trainer, Richard Wootton, who needless to say had suffered a blank day.

"Bit o' bad luck, that last race," remarked Fallon to Wootton. "I thought I was going through the card."

But he got no change out of "Old Man" Wootton, who merely grunted out: "What a blank pity there weren't a few more races on the card!"

For a matter of five or six years the Druid's Lodge stable went on its prosperous way. Then Fallon fell out with his masters, and from what he told me afterwards, he had nobody but himself to blame.

He was then worth about £70,000, in addition to an

establishment he had bought for himself at Shrewton, in Wiltshire. Here he set up as a public trainer, and among his patrons numbered the Argentine meat and shipping millionaire, Sir William Nelson, a gentleman who was also fond of a gamble.

There were many rifts in the "loot". Sir William had a hankering for winning £30,000 over a race, though to be sure he had reason to object, on going into the Ring to back what should have been a hundred to eight chance, to find it a screaming hot favourite with all the evidence of somebody having previously robbed the hen-roost.

According to Jack, it was always the wicked jockey. For instance, at Chester races one day he sprung a very nice two-year-old which, according to Cocker, should have been easy to back at ten to one. Jack went into the Ring after saddling the animal to find the layers bawling five to four the field, his horse. He said nothing at the time. Later on, at Epsom, he had another "springer". The self-same jockey, blissfully unconscious that he had already been found out, asked the trainer's intentions.

"I think we'll drop it out," said Jack. "We'll get no price."

Nevertheless, he ran the filly, and put what is known as a "chalk" jockey up. The bookmakers obligingly knocked the animal out to twelves, fondly imagining it to be a dead 'un. But lo! and behold, the young boy on top came flying down the five furlong course to win by six lengths. When the stable jockey saw the starting price, he nearly had a fit. It was a five to four on and Fallon had won £10,000.

All might have been well with Jack had the shoemaker stuck to his last. But some of the parasites that batten on the Turf took to cultivating his company, and brought him up to the West End of a night, a pastime that has ruined many a good trainer and jockey. He got into tow, for instance, with a millionaire's son who had already been through the Bankruptcy Court to the tune of £56,000.

Jack started card-playing, at which he was a veritable sheep among wolves. Then he started backing bills for other people, charming-mannered young gentlemen in the Army who had good prospects, but no ready cash. When the inevitable default took place, the moneylenders sued Jack and ultimately took possession of Shrewton.

The Great War came and Fallon was just about finished. Nobody would give him any horses, and he disappeared for a time until James White, the millionaire, decided to give him another chance.

I remember the interview that took place between him and White at the latter's offices in the Strand.

"Now, Jack," said White crisply, "you've got just one more chance. You go down to Foxhill, you don't play cards, and you don't booze. It's nothing more than hard work, with everything depending upon yourself."

Jack swore by all the saints in Ireland that it was the narrow and virtuous path for him. True, he would be nothing more than head man for a time; Martin Hartigan would be the trainer, but Jack the really practical man with whom White hoped to achieve some of those vast *coups* that marked his reign at Druid's Lodge.

Things went swimmingly for a year or so. White won a good many races in which the right word from Fallon would make him put £5,000 on a horse. Nevertheless, the squabbles between them were incessant. As, for instance, the day when White came down and asked Fallon to "try" a horse for the Cesarewitch before the weights *were out*.

"Have ye gone crazy?" demanded Fallon. "How can I try a horse before I know what the weights are?"

"You do what I tell you," ordered his lord and master sharply.

"Be jabers," muttered Jack as he went off, "it's a lunatic I'm after trainin' for."

With any other employer but White, poor Jack, then beginning to get on in years a bit, might have made good. But what could he do with a man who would pay 10,000 guineas for a yearling, which the knowledgeable Fallon diagnosed on its arrival at Foxhill as fitted for nothing more than a cab?

So one fine day, in 1921, they parted company and Jack had to look round for another patron. Things went from bad to worse with him; he tried to start training at Epsom, without success. No one would give him any horses. Down and down in the world he went, always hopefully talking about the future, unable to realize that dozens of younger men were now coming into the game. White himself committed

suicide in 1927, and all the wealthy people whom Jack had met with White from time to time turned an unresponsive ear to his suggestions of setting him up in a decent manner.

Further and further it went; one saw him about the racecourses appealing to people's good nature, advising them to back horses which, alas, rarely won. It seemed that his judgment, once so uncanny, had entirely deserted him. I dare say I was more fortunate than most people. I ran into him in the paddock at Newmarket on Cesarewitch day in 1931. He told me to back Noble Star, which ran away with the race.

The years had whitened his hair, though the strong brogue still stuck to him. Always the talk was about the day when he would resume training. Alas, it never came. One of the last times I ever saw him was at Sandown Park in 1934. The last race had been run, and I met Jack, who said: "Have ye got a pound on ye that'll ye'll not be wantin'?"

Resignedly I handed it over. He died some three years ago, a fool to himself it ever there was one.

My experience of the Turf teaches me that very few of the clever brigade keep their winnings. How many professional backers ever held on to the fortunes that passed through their hands? I know of one man who in the course of fifty years bet millions of pounds; he was the king of them all, far bigger than any of the Yankee get-rich-quick crowd. For years he went on, playing the bookmakers at their own game. Then, as the years slipped by, he began to get out of touch with the newer generation of trainers and jockeys. Not so long ago, he gave up, having nothing more to console him than a small house and an income of perhaps £700 or £800 a year. There was a time when his *investments* alone brought him in £30,000 a year. All gone!

Some little time ago, before the Great War, I knew of a trainer who ran into a fortune doping horses. The *modus operandi* was quite simple; he bought a lot of cast-offs, doped them up to the eyes, and won five or six races running with practically all of them.

Ten or twelve years had elapsed since the Yankee dopers had been cleared out, and it was generally thought that no

one would have the temerity to try the game again. Yet this fellow did; he had a professional backer behind him, and for two or three years they flourished. Then the whisper got around, and one day the man with the brains, the professional backer, had it quietly intimated to him that his room would be preferable to his company.

What happened to the trainer? He could get no decent horses from reputable people; in fact, it almost seemed that he had forgotten how to train a horse. When he died seven or eight years ago he was penniless, and his wife, who used to go about bedecked in fur coats and diamonds, had to earn her living as a barmaid.

The trouble about dealing with doping and other racing offences in England is the want of proper stipendiary stewards. A half-hearted attempt has been made to deal with the crooked brigade, but is badly handicapped owing to the attitude adopted by owners. The best class of them strongly resent any aspersions being cast on the running of their horses, for which one can hardly blame them.

CHAPTER XVII

GOING PLACES

HAVING been over quite a lot of ground in the course of a career that has embraced many things, various and nefarious, I am going to record a few impressions of people and places that remain indelibly fixed in my memory.

Port Said in the days before oil-burning steamers came into existence was a sight never to be forgotten. To see those hundreds of skinny-legged Arabs come running up the ships' gangways carrying small baskets of coal on their heads, was an object lesson of humanity emulating the ant. Thick layers of coal-dust everywhere; cabins locked to keep the native thieves out, screaming touts in boats below trying to sell you genuine antiques all the way from Birmingham, plus the inevitable "Jock Ferguson", complete with fez, a skin as brown as a berry, and a choice collection of pornographic postcards.

It's a filthy hole, Port Said, fascinating to the eye from the Suez Canal, but incredibly repulsive ashore with its swarms of beggars, brothel runners and donkeymen offering you a ride on a bag of bones covered with sores. I recollect the Chinese cook on the *S.S. Ping Suey* dealing with an Arab thief who had thrust a long, lean arm through the galley port-hole in search of a newly arrived chicken, in a way that still makes me shudder; he just swung a chopper he was using and nearly severed the limb. The Arab dropped back into the water yelling blue murder and it was just as well, I think, that we sailed out of the noisome hole an hour or two afterwards. Our departure, I remember, took place amidst an active trade in whisky bought from the vendors below at two shillings a bottle—afterwards discovered by the smarties to be pure water and brown sugar.

Gibraltar I have visited many times; my re-action to the Rock is similar to that classic utterance of Sam Lewis, the celebrated Cork Street moneylender. Sam had just done the Grand Tour, France, Italy, Switzerland, etc. One of his friends inquired how he had liked the Eternal City—otherwise Rome.

"You can 'ave Roine," retorted Sam.

However, you can walk down Main Street in Gibraltar; be robbed for a lot of spurious Spanish shawls or a piece of Moorish brass (real "Brum") have a poisonous drink or two, and go back to your ship with the consciousness of duty well and truly done.

Marseilles is better, though here you want to take a firm hand with the pimps and the parasites who wait on the incoming steamers. Once you are away from the docks and reach the rue Cannebière, you are in a fine city, about the best port in Europe apart from Hamburg. What goes on in the back streets, in the reeking back streets where the dingy little cafés and cabarets have their being and every second house has its quota of strident-voiced prostitutes, is no business of yours unless you like to make it so.

I found the naval base of Toulon attractive, clean, well-run, but a place where you wanted to ask no unduly inquisitive questions. The Orient Line used to call there to drop and pick-up passengers; why, heaven only knows, except, perhaps, that the P. & O. Line use Marseilles.

"See Naples and die!" Well, I've seen Naples a few times; the bay is magnificent indeed, the smoke curling out of Vesuvius awesome, the city itself a sad disappointment. You can drive out to Pompeii and ponder over the fact that two thousand years ago this was a flourishing city until Vesuvius arose in wrath at the licentiousness of the people and buried Pompeii in a sarcophagus of red-hot stones, ashes and lava. And thus it remained for nearly eighteen hundred long years, until the newly-constituted Kingdom of Italy began its resurrection.

As you walk through the now carefully-preserved streets and buildings of Pompeii, you say to yourself: "How little has life changed in all this time!" There you can see side by side the sort of tiny shops which are still to be found all around the shores of the Mediterranean, where the owner sits in the front with his wares, chaffering and cheating all day long. Mussolini has modernized the ancient city a good deal; you now drive out there on a superlatively fine motor road, gravely inspect the sights and then go back to Naples to find the swarthy and proud natives scanning you with none-too-friendly eyes.

They haven't been any too fond of the English this last twenty years; Mussolini has seen to that. Where once your liner was allowed to lie at her berth in utter peace, she is now, or was until the war came, invaded by a horde of arrogant police and other officials bearing "many a strange device". Cocky little bottle-shouldered upstarts who would have licked your boots before Il Duce arrived strut the decks of the foreign steamers with feathers in their horrible headgear.

A deck steward, who was a source of much merriment to the passengers, explained the feathers as a decoration only to be worn by those that could yodel. Everywhere you saw on the walls, even in Rome, huge twin portraits of poor little King Victor Emmanuel and Benito Mussolini, something like the Kaiser's "Me und Gott". You were warned on going ashore against even daring to mention the name of this tin god!

Much more to my liking was the romantic little isle of Capri, home of Dr. Axel Munthe, the author of *The Story of San Michele*. I saw him in London a year or so later, a

frail little wisp of a man with eyes hidden behind blue glasses. It was then feared that he might go blind, a fate, one is glad to say, that he escaped. He spoke very precise English in rather a high-pitched voice and I marvelled, having read his wonderful book, that he wrote our language so perfectly.

Capri proved to be a real enchantment, one of those places where you could live "the world forgetting, by the world forgot". You lay off the island in the sapphire blue water and were taken up to the top by a funicular railway, where you found a fascinating little town all by itself. It had a square in the middle where everybody lolled in the hot sunshine and all around, coming from every conceivable angle, dozens of winding passage-ways which had tiny shops and occasional hotels. Over the island itself there ran countless pathways leading to miniature villages; goats and a few sheep croppcd sleepily and ruminatively in the brilliant Mediterranean air, the sea below sparkled with dazzling brightness. Nobody seemed to work; beyond the shopkeepers, one hardly saw the slightest activity.

How different one found the people in Sicily! In Palermo, it seemed that Mussolini had thrown the banditti completely out of business. Roaming around the streets of the well-laid-out city, one saw dozens of ugly-looking villains who could easily be visualized as slitting your throat or holding you to ransom. They could not emigrate to America to join forces with Al Capone; Il Duce had rooted them out of their mountain lairs and made it known that henceforth hard work must be their portion. So there they were in Palermo itself, loafing at the street corners, eyeing you with that sinister malevolence which you see so often in their breed. They utterly spoilt what might have been a pleasant sojourn in a beautiful city. It was a relief to take a drive in an ancient horse carriage, where you meandered slowly and peaceably through the deeply-scented lemon groves, pausing now and again to gaze at a picturesque white villa smothered with bougainvillea.

Truly, this Sicily was an idyllic spot and 'tis sad to think that all its loveliness should have come to echo the roar of the bombing aeroplanes, and that Palermo itself be infested with the Luftwaffe. Our driver was a dear old gentleman, with

but one fault; he insisted, and had his way, that we visited the palace of the old King of Sicily, a place that we found to be filled with hideous Chinese furniture. The catacombs also must be seen; with immense pride he displayed row after row of embalmed bodies lying in these vaults—God knows for what purpose.

They reminded me of Lisbon, another city where they take a morbid pride in introducing you to the dear departed. In this instance it was a choice collection of embalmed bishops and rooms full of their gorgeous habiliments, gold robes and mitres which told you better than any words could have done that the Church must have been indeed a mighty force in Portugal in days gone by. Also not to be missed, if your guide had his way, was a swarm of old State coaches dating back to the fifteenth century, right up to the carriage in which Dom Carlos had been assassinated in 1908.

Perhaps the bitterest disappointment I ever experienced in all my European travels occurred on the Italian Riviera. San Remo itself I found cold, windy and inhospitable, not in the least to be compared with Monte Carlo or Cannes. The main street, running parallel with the front, was effectively shut off from the sunshine by the tall buildings flanking it on either side and the gardens alongside the sea were but a miserable imitation of the dazzling spectacle to be found in front of the Casino at "Monte". Neither could there be any comparison in the hotels, or the people who patronized them. Indifferent shops, third-rate cafés and the direst poverty in the back streets, made you realize that, with all its advertised charms, San Remo possessed little or no charm for *Da Inglesi*. Nor were the inhabitants at all cordial; they just scowled at you, until it was a relief to get out of the place.

Infinitely more agreeable were the little fishing villages you came across towards Genoa—Portofino, and Sansovino, where our own Lord Derby possessed a luxurious villa and named after it the horse that won him the Blue Riband of the Turf in 1924, one pouring wet day that made a vivid contrast to the weather they were enjoying in the sunny south.

To the west of San Remo there were pretty little spots—Ospedaletti and Alassio, set high on the cliffs that suddenly

arose, but unlikely to attract the healthy. They were filled with consumptives and cripples and you hastened on your way until you reached Bordighera, where you found the only British colony on the Italian Riviera.

The usual crowd—tennis and bridge-players, tea-drinkers and gossipers. I spent a week there, in what was reputed to be the best hotel. Before my time was up, I congratulated myself on not having to sample the worst.

At the frontier was Ventimiglia, small and ugly, with but one redeeming feature—the spacious flower market which, in the season, opened at three o'clock every afternoon. An official blew a whistle and like a flash there were whisked off hundreds of huge baskets the covers which concealed masses and masses of violets, both blue and Parma, roses of every possible variety, carnations, anemones and other flowers. All of them were grown, with labour one could hardly imagine, up the rocky slopes of the Alpes Maritimes, in tiny plots of soil arduously carried up the mountain-side. You could see whole families toiling away, from the aged grandmother to the eight-year-old child. Large quantities of these flowers went by train to Covent Garden and I wondered how much the growers received by the time all the charges were met.

One intriguing little sight I did encounter at Ventimiglia—two of Mussolini's cocked-hat minions escorting some local desperado to the lock-up. Apparently they possessed no handcuffs; but they managed well enough by tying the rascal's hands in front of him with a piece of string!

And so you cross into France, with pretty Mentone to greet you and a general atmosphere of homeliness welcome enough after the indifferent Italians. Numbers of English people had made it their home, and Belgians also. Up in the hills you found dozens of comfortable hotels where you could live *en pension* without doing your pocket much damage, while in the town itself the shops catered extensively for those who hankered for the homeland. Through Roquebrune you ran into Monte-Carlo itself and there, if only for a few days, you cast anchor.

Time has dimmed much of my early enthusiasm for the Principalité. When first I clapped eyes on it in 1921 I thought I had at last found Paradise. The dazzling cleanli-

ness of it, the magnificent flower-beds, the fierce-looking gendarmes who strolled around in their white drill trousers, blue tunics and short swords, made you believe that all this was just a setting for a musical comedy. High up on the hill towards the West was the palace of the Prince of Monaco, of whose life I was to hear a great deal later on from René Cassellari, one of the Inspectors of the Surété Générale in Paris who had served with him in North Africa and afterwards came to be entrusted with some of his involved domestic affairs.

But you quickly tired of this glittering spot; it struck you as being too meretricious, utterly soulless, and all designed to relieve you of your money with the least possible delay. You went into the Casino, grandiloquently entitled Société des Bains de Mer, after applying for a ticket as though you were receiving some priceless privilege, only to find it crammed with the cream of the Paris *cocottes—en saison*, of course. Later on came the Sporting Club, infinitely more exclusive; but the "Kitchen", as the roulette rooms were known, had gone well down in the social scale when I made my first visit to Monte Carlo. It had a distinct smack of Whitechapel.

Nevertheless, it would be foolish to deny the fascination of this seductive spot. I met many a well-known Londoner living there and the golf course at Mont Agel, cleverly laid out on the heights above the town, was a tonic to those who needed a little exercise. On my initial visit, the famous Hôtel de Paris must have been coining money. It was crammed with millionaires, English, French and American. Some few years later, however, when Wall Street had collapsed and London also was feeling the draught, a minor revolution took place. I noticed in the Continental *Daily Mail* that the Hôtel de Paris now offered *en pension* terms at twenty-five shillings a day! Still, that was the blight that gradually spread over the entire Riviera. The Ruhl and the Negresco on the Promenade des Anglais at Nice were utterly empty, as were the Miramar and the Martinez on the Boulevard de la Croisette at Cannes—two splendid hotels recently built with English money.

Juan-les-Pins made a pleasing change from Monte Carlo; here, hidden among the pine trees and the mimosa, was a

holiday spot as yet unspoiled, where sun-bathing could be indulged in to your heart's content and a small *appartement* rented furnished for a couple of pounds a week.

Nice I liked for the racing, which made a welcome break in the week and enabled you to meet many a personage of interest to a journalist. I had a good look over the Palais de la Méditerranée, the palatial casino built by the American millionaire, Jay Gould, at a cost of £500,000. Apparently it was what the French term a "concession", on whose part, soon revealed itself. It had to compete with two more in the town and it must have been a relief to the owner when a tremendous fire gutted it.

At Cannes was another English crowd, the wise to be found among the tennis-players and the golfers, the wealthy in the Casino of an evening playing baccara against the Greek syndicate presided over by the sphinx-faced Zographos. You could see the Dolly Sisters there, smothered in diamonds and emeralds; the multi-millionaire André Citroen, gambling millions of francs. One could vastly admire him as a man of cast-iron nerve. Now and then I ran into my erstwhile acquaintance, Solly Joel. His yacht *Eileen* would lie in the harbour alongside the piratical brigantine owned by Sir Warden Chilcott, one white, the other black—the lion lying down with the lamb, as it were.

Well, it all made a diverting sight for an impecunious journalist; you looked at these people, just wondering where all the money came from. Further up the harbour lay the yacht of the man who could probably have bought and sold any of them, the Duke of Westminster. The *Cutty Sark*, a converted destroyer, I believe, had a fame that no other yacht on the Riviera could boast.

Round about Cannes also was a colony of Russian emigrés, exiles from the revolution. There were innumerable artists, who, with the permission of the Municipalité, held exhibitions and sales on the Croisette and, of course, the usual "English Bars", remarkable only for their utter dissimilarity from the real thing.

One day, perhaps, it will all come back. But I think not; the superfluous cash of the world will be wanted for other places than the Riviera when the Second World War comes to an end.

You can take a run over to Deauville, a tiresome journey via Southampton and Havre, and thence across the mouth of the Seine to dingy old Trouville, which now looks like some poor, worn-out woman. But Deauville in the season, if you can afford it, is well worth while. The Hotel Normandie, built in château-style, is one of the finest in Europe, even if it doesn't exactly cater for the Fourth Estate. There is no "front", just a board-walk, American style. The season is exactly six weeks, and no more. You'll see at Deauville more millionaires than anywhere else in creation and the racecourse of an afternoon is fairly littered with lucre.

Le Touquet has its charms and is especially handy to England. You run over to Boulogne by steamer and from there motor over to this attractively laid-out spot situated in a pine forest. However, as I say, these places cost money and the economically-minded can compromise fairly well with a holiday on the Belgian coast.

Ostend isn't what it was in the days of the famous Leopold II; but you can run up the coast to Le Zoute and Knocke to enjoy the bathing—not just now, of course!—but in normal times—with a champagne-like air to help you along to health and happiness. Every day during July and August there is racing. There are two or three golf courses, and in Ostend, in the rue Longue, a couple of the finest restaurants on the Continent.

Maybe my tastes are bourgeois; still, Belgium is a country I know and like very well. You can cross it either way in three hours; it is crammed with historical interest all the way from the coast right up to Liège and Namur. Up in the Belgian Ardennes is Spa, a fine health spot, but no longer popular as it was in the heyday of the long-whiskered Leopold.

Once upon a time I descended upon the romantic Duchy of Luxembourg, my mind filled with that tuneful show "The Count of Luxembourg". Alas, the only revelry and romance that presented itself was a café chantant in which a lady of some sixty summers was doing an Apache dance with a youth who might have been her grandson. The audience sat around gaping whilst I, with a young Belgian friend who had been marooned with me in Brussels over the week-end, wandered disconsolately out into the sunshine. The sentry

on duty outside the royal palace threw his cigarette away as we approached and came smartly to the slope; but alas, we had no camera. We returned to Brussels disappointed and disillusioned.

I've seen Paris often enough, and lived there long enough, never to worry if I don't go there again. The most interesting time I ever had was with the René Cassellari mentioned in this chapter. He took me around the choicer spots of Montmartre and Montparnasse and, to give the gentleman his due, he knew where to eat. Cassellari was the detective who had charge of that flaming sensation of thirty odd years ago —the disappearance of Leonardo da Vinci's immortal picture, Mona Lisa. He never found it; as may yet be remembered, it came to light in the country of its origin, whence it had been taken by the Italian workman who had lifted it from the Louvre.

He was a noted man, this Cassellari. Among the big cases that he successfully handled was that of the naval officer, Benjamin Ullmo, who sold a mass of secret information to the German master spy I met in Berlin with Steinhauer, Pierre Theisen. When the French captured Theisen and court-martialled him at Havre in 1915, Ullmo's *affaire* appeared in the indictment against him.

Paris was undergoing noticeable changes immediately before the war. You met Germans everywhere; they were in and out of all the newspaper offices, just the same as they were in Brussels and Amsterdam. And London also, if it comes to that. Any journalist who wanted a trip to Berlin could have it, at the expense of the Reich.

As far back as 1916 I saw a sight on my travels that will never be effaced from my mind—the remains of a battalion of the Sherwood Foresters lying on the ground, close to Ballsbridge, Dublin. They were the poor boys who had been marched up the road in column of route, after being hastily disembarked at Kingstown on the first Monday of the Irish Rebellion of 1916. Two machine-guns placed in a red-brick house at the top of the road caught them in enfilade and practically wiped them out before anyone realized what was happening.

I was stationed in the south at that time, in Moore Park

camp, Fermoy, to be precise, and on coming back from Easter leave in England received orders to take a couple of hundred men up to Dublin. We had a pretty hectic time in the fair city which is reputed to be so pretty, what with snipers, bomb throwers and spies. I felt much relieved when the time came to go south where, for another month, I had a flying column to occupy my mind.

Ireland in my eyes is about the most overrated country in the world. With the exception of Killarney, once the property of the portly Earl of Kenmare, otherwise Viscount Castlerosse, otherwise Valentine Browne, I didn't fancy it in the least. However, I expect the Irish don't fancy me, so we'd be all square at the nineteenth, if ever we meet there.

A first-class piece of education and environment for a jaded journalist, as I frequently was after writing a big story, can be found in the West Indies. You set off in a cruising liner—I almost said boozing!—and provided you can do the job properly, i.e. get yourself a real good cabin, not to mention an adequate tropical kit, you'll be full of the joy of life. I managed such a trip and saw much to enlighten me.

Ten days across the Atlantic, via Gibraltar, brought you to Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, where you lay out a mile or two and go ashore by tender. Kingston, Jamaica, is the only British possession in the West Indies where you can "lay alongside". At Port-of-Spain a nice old nigger tailor came aboard, anxious to make us some silk suits, which would be finished by the evening—right off the peg. With a couple of my licentious friends from Brighton, I replied that we were not in want of any such garments, "but," I added, "if you go and ask that gentleman over there, and tell him the price is fifty bob, you'll probably get an order." And he did too, from one of England's leading tailors!

The heat was appalling at Port-of-Spain, but much more bearable up at St. Ann's, on top of the island. Driving up there, I was tickled to death to watch a cricket match in the jungle between two teams of young darkies, a real blood match with their girl friends sitting on a fence barracking them in true Australian style.

What amused me even more were the names these dusky damsels possessed—Marjorie, Gwendolen, Florence and

such-like. But I also noticed then, and continued to find it so all through the West Indies, the wretched little shacks these black people lived in. It made you wonder about the wisdom of educating them according to English standards, while paying them wages which represented nothing but sordid poverty. I was not greatly surprised a few years afterwards when Trinidad became the scene of serious rioting and bloodshed.

There was no reason why these native workers should not have been well paid. The companies that sold their products in England were all paying handsome dividends. Still, you found that everywhere.

At St. Ann's, where all the English people lived, proved to be a well-laid-out little town, with a fine cricket ground in the middle and innumerable comfortable houses. It was certainly the only place where the white race could exist.

There had already been plenty of trouble at Kingston when we anchored there, for a few days' stay. In the city itself rioting was going on almost every night, while when you got out in the country-side you heard ugly stories of white overseers on the plantations being regularly attacked with the heavy knives used by the black cutters. Kingston I found a bright and colourful place, especially of a morning when the negro women came in to do their shopping, clad in their flowing clothing, which they wore with memorable grace. There were also a couple of very fine hotels, the Myrtle Bank in the city itself, and the Constant Spring a few miles outside. Many American visitors came there and I imagined liked it a good deal better than Cuba, if only to get away from the rapacious creatures who made life in Havana well-nigh impossible.

It would have been pleasant to stay a few weeks in Jamaica, to travel properly around the island and have a good look at the native life. At one small village, which I visited with John Hopkins, a director of United Dairies, I came across the local William Whiteley, who had a notice outside saying: "Have you tried our halfpenny cigars?"

"Come on, John," I said to Hopkins, "we must have a couple of these."

The bespectacled old gentleman who owned the establishment wouldn't have it at all.

"No, sah," said he very decidedly, "you don't want dem ha'penny cigars. Gennelman like you only smoke tuppenny cigars."

What could a gentleman do?

Noticeable indeed was the difference in the people outside the British possessions. Steaming through the starlit tropical waters, you reached Havana, tied up at the imposing wharf, and hied yourself ashore to be greeted by as choice a collection of cut-throats as I have ever come across. This could easily be understood. Cuba had just been through one of her habitual revolutions and, I imagined, the warring parties had called a truce so that they might go down, jointly and individually, to make war on the English tourists. These brutes were downright dangerous and the Havana police wouldn't go near them. They just took possession of the docks, to do more or less as they liked. The only way out of the difficulty was to hire a car and drive straight at them. When you had succeeded in doing this, you found that Havana was a city well worth visiting.

Its main street, the Prado, had been modelled on the lines of the Prado in Madrid, but was much more modern in its immense width, with avenues of trees all the way down. All this, of course, was really American work brought about by the Spanish-American war of 1898. The U.S. people had also done something else for the people of Cuba. They had built them the handsomest parliament house I have ever seen in a new country, a replica of the Capitol at Washington, of beautiful white stone, with magnificent steps worthy of a great nation.

Inside this Capitol also I found nothing but priceless Cuban mahogany, with doors three inches thick. The parliament chamber itself had been done in this mahogany, and I also went through a library whose panelling must have cost a fortune.

Nevertheless, with all this lavishness, Havana was undergoing a very bad time. The Wall Street crash of a few years previously had completely killed the tourist trade from America. The fine hotels in the city were empty and the luxurious shops along the Prado would almost give you their wares.

*Other causes had been at work to make Cuba in general,

and Havana in particular, dismal as well as dangerous. Practically all the big cigar-making firms, sick to death of the eternal fighting that went on, had removed their factories to America. Unemployment was rife everywhere; I saw with my own eyes thousands of the natives, as well as many negroes, sleeping out in the parks with not a centavo in the world. All they possessed was a sharp knife, which they were ready to use on anyone who looked like providing an easy meal.

Some of us went through the only cigar factory in the town still working—that of the Corona people, who very kindly showed us the making of a cigar from the arrival of the leaf on the top floor, right away down through the different processes of manufacture, until you reached the sale-room on the ground floor.

I felt a trifle surprised as I noticed that practically all the men, and the women, engaged in making these cigars, smoked them all day long. The men, I was informed, received a free allowance of five a day.

You were permitted to buy what you liked from the sale room at trade prices. I treated myself to a couple of boxes, and they *were* cigars. Homeward bound, I would sport one on the promenade deck, with parsimonious friends walking close behind sucking in the bouquet free of charge.

From Cuba we went across to Venezuela, where you were taken ashore at La Guaira and driven inland to Caracas, the capital, some fifteen miles distant. The locals seemed totally indifferent from the English, and even hostile. Whether they knew too much about English oil company promoters I don't know; but they certainly went nowhere out of their way to give us even a smile. But I did notice that there was a fine bonhomie about the Venezuelan soldiery; they all smoked cigars on the march.

Infinitely more interesting was the Dutch island of Curacao, where all the Australian and New Zealand steamers proceeding through the Panama canal re-fuel. You can take it from me that the Dutch are very fine colonists. It vastly impressed me to see how clean and well-ordered Curacao was, with its fine big stores, civil assistants, and excellent merchandise at low prices. Interesting also, was a local dance

hall in full swing, with a shade temperature of not less than a hundred fahrenheit.

There were pretty little dance partners on tap, Chinese, Japanese, Creoles, Carib girls, and a few odd whites. With the paint and the powder on, you could hardly tell t'other from which.

From Curacao we made tracks for Panama, where you tie up at Christobal, if you are not going through the canal. All we did was to lie there a few days. You went across the bridge into Colon. This is a tough spot, believe me, filled with all the riff-raff you get in any naval port. Hefty great American naval police patrolled the streets in pairs, swinging their batons. The town was full of vice-shops and sly grog dens and, if you were wise, you didn't roam down the back streets of a night.

An eventful day in one's life could be spent by taking a trip over to Panama City in the train. You passed through a country in which you saw millions of long-dead tree stumps sticking up out of the water, relics, I suppose, dating back to the time when the Canal was first opened for traffic in 1914.

The big pumping station at Gatun half-way over gave you further proof of American efficiency. It was all spotlessly clean and well-ordered; the ships working their way through just quietly passed without any shouting or the slightest unnecessary fuss.

Blinding heat greeted us at Panama City, on the Pacific side. Here you found a weird collection of Chinese, Japanese and Indian traders, with silks, shawls, panama hats and all manner of metal ornaments lavishly displayed everywhere. You had to visit a place outside the city where Henry de Morgan, the pirate, was reputed to have buried a lot of his plunder, and by way of additional punishment, you had to eat an enormous meal, which was purgatory in the stifling atmosphere. Sweat! I thought I could stand a bit of heat, being an Australian. Panama got nearer to purgatory than anything I have ever experienced.

Still, it was well worth while. Going back home that night, I got to talking with the American ticket-collector on the railway station.

"How long have you been here?" I inquired.

"Close on twenty years," he said.

"How much longer are you going to stay?"

"Buddy—" this with great earnestness—"my time for pension is due next year and I'll catch the first boat back to the States so quick that they won't see me for dust."

I didn't blame him. Unless you can live in these climates in cool houses, with lashings of cool drinks around you, and plenty of servants, it isn't much good.

We proceeded on our way, this time coming up at the Bahamas, a spot fairly redolent of British history. Here, too, you lay off-shore and landed on a jetty filled with vegetable sellers and chattering niggers. Nassau, I found, was a quiet, sedate town, though much altered, I believe, in recent years. Sir Bede Clifford, at that time the Governor, enterprisingly induced a lot of people to come down from the States to make it a second Miami. All manner of fine villas suddenly sprang up, not to mention some palatial hotels where fancy prices were the order of the day and night. I happened to see in London, not long after this took place, the figures they were asking to rent one of these villas for a three months' season. A thousand pounds was a commonplace! And who would have thought that a tiny little spot like this, right off the map, would one day have an ex-King of England for its Governor?

As a matter of fact, King Edward VIII was not the first royal personage the Bahamas had known. John Hopkins and I went for a drive round the island in an old shandrydan, in charge of an ancient nigger, a friendly soul.

I had a look at his driving licence in the front. It gave his name as James the First.

"Hello," I said, "I didn't know you were a King."

"Well, sah," he told me, "it's like this. Ah've been driving this here carriage for forty years, just called James. Then, one day, ma grandson took out a licence, and they said to him: 'Both of youse can't be Jaines. We'll make your grandfather Jaines the First, and you'll have to be the Second.' "

Everybody in Nassau went to sleep of an afternoon; all you could do as a tourist was to take a drive round the island, and then return to your ship. Hanging around I saw the real gang of cut-throat bootleggers, now out of work, alas, owing to the repeal of prohibition in the States. Judging

by the slashes on their faces, they had been mixed up in a few nice little brawls.

The next port of call was Bridgetown in Barbadoes, where the heat hits you in the face and effectually deterred anything in the way of exercise. Still, you always find something worthy or mention. The moment we stepped ashore a curly-headed nigger in Salvation Army uniform informed us that it was the local Self-Denial Week. There was nothing in the town worth looking at, a state of affairs which applied around most of the smaller British islands. We went over to Porto Rico, an American protectorate which also boasted a Capitol similar to Havana. Here the Governor invited the distinguished visitors to call upon him. I went along with Viscount Dunedin, a sporty old Law Lord who was game for anything.

The Viscount didn't think much of our reception; neither did I. We were offered nothing, not even a cup of tea, and came back much disgusted to find that our stores had all been sealed while we were in port.

At Porto Rico, however, I saw something I had never witnessed before, the awful sight of a town which had just suffered a tidal wave. Over on the other side of the bay of San Juan, there was the débris of thousands of houses floating about, with the poor coloured owners dismally trying to find something with which to start life afresh.

And so we set sail for home, richer in mind, braced in body. A final call at Madeira awaited us, after which it was back to the grindstone, with spring to greet us.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GATHERING WAR-CLOUDS. SPIES AND THE FALL OF FRANCE

A MEMORABLE event, slight in itself, but deeply significant to anybody like myself, was the exposure in 1933 of the Seaforth Highlander officer, Lieutenant Norman Baillie-Stewart, for betraying army secrets to Germany.

Strangely enough, the first news of the affair came during the West Indies trip I have just described, in the form of the

ship's radio news that appeared on the luncheon tables. It merely said that an officer of the regiment had been detained in the Tower of London on certain unspecified charges.

"Hullo, they're at it again," I remarked to some friends.

Someone inquired who and what. I told them, little dreaming at the time that the arrest of this Baillie-Stewart represented just a peep at what was going on behind the curtain in Germany.

Nations that are desirous of keeping the peace do not, as a rule, suborn each other's officers. It arouses intense suspicion and ill-feeling, as witness the scandals that continually came to light between France and Germany for so many years during the reign of the Kaiser. As far as Baillie-Stewart was concerned, he subsequently admitted that he had made the first approach to Berlin. However, if the Reichswehr officers he saw had been genuinely wishful to have no more trouble with Britain, they would either have kicked him out forthwith, or, better still, have quietly reported to Whitehall the presence of a dirty traitor in the British Army. But, as a straw indicating the direction of the big wind coming before long, they did nothing of the sort; they entered into negotiations with him, provided him with an elaborate alibi in the form of a non-existent siren called "Marie-Louise", and told him exactly what they wanted—all the latest intelligence about British tanks, another straw in the wind, as we discovered to our cost within twelve months of the outbreak of war.

His blood-money amounted to little in the long run—a trifling matter of £250. He was not to know, or, if he did, he didn't care, that the Germans were going through precisely the same procedure that had been adopted with the chief gunner, George Parrott, in 1913. "Bring the stuff over from England, where someone will meet you in Rotterdam and pay you the money. If any suspicion is aroused, say that you have an interesting little *affaire* with a beautiful woman."

Baillie-Stewart was not to know how much deeper he would sink into the mire, that if he raised any objections to his orders or grew unduly squeamish, he would then, under threats of denunciation, be blackmailed into going on with his traitorous work. But he seems to have been utterly

indifferent to patriotic scruple and, like the bungling amateur he was at the dangerous game, soon brought the M.I.5. people on his track.

A curious-looking customer! I had a look in while his court-martial was proceeding at the Duke of York's school, Chelsea. Except for a pair of unpleasant, closely-set eyes, you could hardly credit that this fair-haired young fellow could be such an utter renegade, and, worse still, that he would confess in open court to being nothing more than a *souteneur*, just to explain away the money that came from the mythical "Marie-Louise".

I have written at some little length about this noxious creature because, as I say, it marked a definite turning point in the relations between Germany and Britain. From thence onwards, there began a long succession of similar cases, not so much in England, as in France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Poland and even the United States. Japanese agents started getting busy in the British possessions in the Far East; anybody who had studied the implications and ramifications of international intrigue as closely as I had, could have no hesitation in saying that the world would soon be at war again.

Spies are the harbingers of hostilities, though to be sure that fact seems to have remained unknown to the governments presided over by Messrs. Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald. If they had bothered to read, and to take the proper heed, of the cases that were continually cropping up in France, they might have realized that it was high time we, and the British Empire generally, put our house in order.

Even now, it all seems nothing more than a bad dream, that we, the greatest Empire the world has ever known, should have left our heritage in the hands of these two preposterous people, one of them, MacDonald, nothing more than a pronounced pacifist all his life; the other, the spokesman of a political party which, as a party, has been singularly reluctant to spend money in defending the Empire.

I remember Mr. MacDonald attempting to travel to Sweden in 1917, for the purpose of discussing peace proposals with Swedish and German democrats. The seaman of the

ship he proposed to use unanimously refused to take him. I have seen him mobbed at "Stop-the-war" meetings, and still come up smiling. This was the man who became the head of a National Government when Britain should have been arming to the teeth, instead of prating about peace and goodwill to all men.

However, much the same attitude was being adopted by the Continental nations. The French were too pre-occupied with internal scandals of the Stavisky brand, the alleged Communist peril, and political jobbery, to take any proper heed of the thunderstorms fast blowing up. The Dutch and the Belgians, and the Norwegians, were for peace at almost any price, and could point, with complete justification, to the fact that Britain didn't expect war.

Was not Mr. Stanely Baldwin telling Mr. Winston Churchill: "There is no immediate menace confronting us or anyone in Europe at this moment—no actual emergency." This on November 25th, 1934. Can't you see Hitler and Goering shaking hands with each other?

We signed two naval treaties which in effect reduced us to a second-class sea-power. The Japanese were a signatory to the first precious document; they must have smiled and thought, as they proceeded apace to build secretly a huge fleet, how easy their ideas of Imperial expansion would be. The Nazis, under the Treaty of 1935, which graciously accorded them permission to build up to forty-five per cent of our submarine strength, promptly began building 450 per cent.

You see, they knew where they nearly won the Great War of 1914—by nearly starving Britain into submission with their U-boats. They were also aware of another important factor, the dominating part that the tank would play in wars of the future.

They had lost air superiority at the end of the last war; that also would be remedied. Their secret service achievements compared poorly with those of the Allies; it would not happen again. Allied propaganda had contributed heavily to their defeat; this time they would work on the sound old adage of "thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just."

If Germany's fatuous foes cared to stand by the League of

Nations, well, so much the better. Preliminarily, the Italian Fascists would test that talking machine with a march into Abyssinia.

As I say, it is all nothing but a nightmare, an hallucination that you might expect to disappear as you wake up in the morning.

Let us take a brief glance over the innumerable espionage cases, all inspired by the enemy secret service, which were coming to light with alarming frequency, telling you plainer than any fair words that war was being prepared across the Rhine. I mention them merely because it is a subject I know so well.

Towards the end of 1933, for instance, the Deuxième Bureau in Paris unmasked a very pretty little conspiracy in Metz, one of the principal fortified districts of the northern front. A whole gang of men in the garrison, through the instrumentality of a café-keeper named Emil Dresd and his wife, the latter known as "La Belle Sophie", were selling secrets to German agents. The husband established himself safely inside the German frontier, just as Pierre Theisen had done twenty years previously, while his loving wife seduced the traitors, literally and metaphorically, from the quiet little café just outside Metz. Discovery came in time, of course. A young cavalryman, a machine-gun instructor who was professedly willing to sell the secrets of a new weapon that the Carabiniers were just receiving, took counsel with his superiors, with the result that Sophie and some of her attendant acolytes were neatly trapped and packed off to penal servitude.

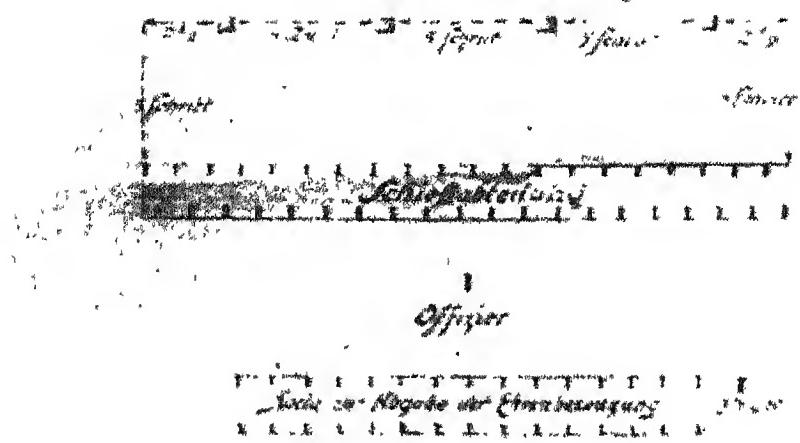
All this, sad to say, represented but the beginning of the rot that quickly manifested itself. That same year the Deuxième Bureau uncovered in Paris a real spy plot, a gigantic affair organized by one Baroness Lydia Stahl. The origin of this enterprising lady appears to have been Russian, with a Baltic baron by way of a husband. According to the confession she disgorge on being faced with the necessity of saving her soul, the Soviet Government had financed her with the money to found an espionage bureau in Paris. In this dangerous venture she succeeded so well that she took to extending its activities, to the Germans, the Finns, the



Captain Georges Frogé (on left)

Bild 2

Die Vollstreckung



German plan drawn up for executing prisoners

Hungarians, the Rumanians—anywhere, in fact, where money could be earned. She found many people in Paris ready and willing to earn a dishonest penny, including old Professor Martin, the translator and interpreter to the French Ministry of Marine, who not only spoke sixty-eight different languages, but also one that the elderly Madame Stahl understood, the language of love. Madame seems to have conducted quite a salon; she received there a choice variety of venial officers, from a Staff Colonel at the War Office—who got five years for his foolishness—and numberless women who were part and parcel of what was nothing more than a house of assignation.

Two of these fecund females, one Polish, the other French, appeared at the subsequent trial with young babies in their arms. The fathers thereof possibly represented a problem for the League of Nations. In due course, after three hundred arrests had been made, a large batch of prisoners were tried secretly and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. It was disclosed that the plans for the industrial mobilization of Paris in the event of war had been sold to Germany. The Deuxième Bureau probably did not discover all the damage that had occurred and, in their eyes, the mere five years that Madame received equal with the other principal conspirators, must have appeared a grim joke.

In October 1934 came an even more unpalatable *affaire*—the arrest and condemnation of Captain Georges Frogé, an officer of the senior administrative staff stationed at Belfort. This squashy-eyed scoundrel, under the blandishments of a renegade Polish officer calling himself Stanilaus Krauss, delivered to Germany all the defence secrets of the Maginot Line and the defence region of Belfort. He appears to have been found by one Anton Geissman, Austrian Jew in the employ of a mysterious "Dr. Gerbracht", a German master spy who sat in a Frankfort hotel and sent his emissaries over the frontier to smell out the would-be traitors. Frogé fell into the toils; he was a heavy gambler on the Paris Bourse and over a period of two years, probably under continual threats of exposure, he must have betrayed to the Germans all they wanted to know about the north-eastern fortifications of France.

Still, the rift in the "loot" always existed. Geissman grew

a trifle dissatisfied with his share; he tackled Frogé and got nothing; then Krauss. The upshot of his failure took the form of a visit to the *Surété Générale*, where he offered his services as a secret agent. To make good forthwith, he could produce a couple of first-class criminals now betraying *La Belle France*. He was appointed "on approval" and forthwith led the *Surété* to Krauss, who, in his turn, ratted on Frogé.

Both of them went to prison for five years, a mere trifle when you consider the fate of Captain Dreyfus for offences he had never committed.

Week after week came revelations of rampant treachery, railwaymen betraying plans of the transport system in the North; naval officers from Toulon in league with German agents and, on the Eastern frontier, a well-organized conspiracy with its headquarters in Geneva which extended all the way down to Grenoble.

The Radical and Socialist Governments of Blum and Daladier were but another name for assassins in the eyes of the Generals and the Admirals who really mattered in France. Neither Pétain, Weygand nor Darlan were on good terms with their political masters.

I met General Weygand at a British Legion dinner in Paris in 1937. He was the guest of honour and I was much interested in this small, wiry, brown-faced soldier, whose eyes were as bright as a boy's and whose speech came fast and fluent. He spoke briefly on the indissoluble bonds of friendship between France and Britain, of the glorious future that lay before the two countries and all the usual meaningless nonsense you hear at such functions. Later on, I had a few words with him and from them gathered that he profoundly disapproved of British foreign policy.

The disastrous early course of this war, in my opinion, might have undergone a total change if M. Daladier had appointed Weygand Commander-in-Chief on the Western Front, instead of General Gamelin. The latter, of course, had the reversion of the post owing to his having recently been Chief of the General Staff. Weygand, in any case, was probably deemed too old; he was seventy-two when the war came, but nevertheless remarkably able-minded and able-bodied.

You could fairly smell all the intrigue going on in Paris. I must have been gifted with second sight when, on the morning that we declared war on Germany, I remarked to a Belgian friend in London: "We shall be all right till France cracks."

Petty corruption confronted you everywhere. Even in the best of hotels you found the staffs playing tricks that made you wonder what was the matter with France. The newspapers began to grow bitterly critical of the Anglo-French alliance, a phase of the situation which was not lost upon that well-known American journalist, Mr. Henry Luce, the owner of *Time*. In his opinion, and he published it, the Paris Press had become the sewer of the world.

The Government expelled Otto Abetz, unofficial counsellor of the German Embassy, for being involved in many of these scandals, little dreaming, no doubt, that in a matter of two years he would be sitting in the French capital as Nazi dictator.

Holland and Belgium, on a smaller scale, underwent much the same experience, especially after the outbreak of war. German officers in various guises could be seen everywhere. Fifty of them descended upon Antwerp and Zeebrugge and no doubt satisfied themselves that no serious opposition awaited them there. The Albert Canal fortifications they already knew about; had not a German engineer been in charge of their construction?

I asked Colonel Diepenrycx, the former Chief of the Belgian Intelligence Department, how his country had fared at the hands of the Fifth Columnists who had wreaked such havoc in Holland and Norway.

"It was not so bad with us," he told me. "We kept them under fairly well. But when I went to The Hague as military attaché, I found the place fairly alive with German agents."

What happened in Holland is well-nigh incredible. The paratroops, clad in Dutch uniforms copied from dozens that were smuggled across the frontier in the winter of 1939-40—a plot discovered all too late by the Netherlands Government—should have told the authorities better than any words the fate that would shortly overtake them. Nazi

"cells" everywhere, young members of which were drilled in basements, and traitors in every walk of life, represented so much writing on the wall that called for immediate action.

Norway and Denmark fell with ludicrous ease, which even now appears unbelievable, the Danes succumbing to blood-curdling threats with a timidity sadly at variance with their valorous ancestry. One day, no doubt, we shall hear more of this abject surrender and in particular exactly what happened in Poland.

From treachery, thank God, we have not suffered. Our traitors were insignificant in numbers and ability. Members of the Anglo-German Fellowship that was formed under the auspices of that versatile journalist, Dr. R. G. Rösel, the London correspondent of the *National Zeitung* of Essen, would doubtless have been horrified at any suggestion of treachery towards their own country. They went over to Nuremberg and Salzburg to be welcomed with great effusiveness: they were even introduced to Hitler himself and came under his spell.

Sir Oswald Mosley, the head of the British Union of Fascists, was a strange type to mix himself up with this woolly-headed lot. As the son of an old Tory squire who became greatly noted as a breeder of pedigree cattle, he may have thought his Black Shirts would bring about a new high-class breed of the British race, the pure Aryan strain.

Among the trifles that came my journalistic way in connection with the home-bred apostles of the New Order, was an interview with one of them who had temporarily gained his release on what the B.B.C. calls a "technical hitch". I didn't want to sympathize with him; I merely wanted to know whether the stories of the luxurious life they were supposed to be enjoying in prison were true.

"You can take it from me," he said feelingly, "that they are not. You are permitted to have food sent in, if you possess the money. You get certain privileges denied to convicted prisoners, but otherwise, our lot is very little different."

Something approaching a mutiny, however, broke out during the period of that tremendous autumn and winter

bombing of 1940. The Fascists seemed to think they should be moved to a place of safety; they refused to find comfort in the explanation: "But those are your friends overhead."

Espionage, sabotage and Fifth Columnism in Great Britain have been of little assistance to the enemy. He has sent over numbers of secret agents, who have received very short shrift indeed; in the main, they are much the same type that arrived here during the Great War—credulous creatures filled up with stories of how simple it would be to send information out. In these days, of course, Ireland is practically the only avenue of escape and, indeed, means of communication.

Spies, equipped with short-wave wireless transmitters and large sums of money, have been dropped by parachute, or have landed in small rubber boats from bombing aeroplanes. Theirs were death missions, indeed, for they were all strangers to England and could not possibly hope to proceed far undetected.

During the autumn "blitz" of 1940, several of these spies were brought over to observe the effect of the bombing in certain districts. Their instructions were to report to a man in a Midland town, where facilities for them to reach Ireland would be available. But there is no evidence that any of them got this far; one hapless wight badly sprained his ankle as he hit Mother Earth in the early dawn and lay under a hedge, helpless. Unluckily for him, his yellow boots were exposed to the vulgar gaze. A Home Guard making for his bed caught sight of them, and that was a death sentence for a German spy.

All espionage and secret service work has been radically altered by the reconnoitring aeroplane and the giant cameras that can take photographs from 15,000 feet. In this war especially further drastic changes have taken place owing to the fact that neutral countries, with the exception of Spain and Sweden, can no longer be used as bases of operations. In the last war, Holland fairly swarmed with the spies and counter-spies of the warring nations, as did Switzerland to a minor degree. Copenhagen and Madrid had their quotas; but to-day the value of such cities is negligible from the United Nations' point of view.

Still, we all keep on trying and when you are at war it's

no use placing your hand on your heart, murmurings: "Thank God, I am not as other men."

America was riddled with Axis agents, far more so than in the Great War. Practice makes perfect and where the spies were formerly short of money, they can now spend what they like. It's all in paper money, which will be promptly repudiated or rendered completely valueless if Germany loses the war. In other words "Heads I win, tails you lose."

South America has been equally alive with the Axis emissaries, German, Italian and Japanese. Brazil had a few thousand of the last quietly and carefully prepared for the Nipponese equivalent of "Der Tag".

There was even a Nazi Party in Johannesburg, formed, as one might expect, from the disaffected Africander elements. The police were involved and only the prompt action of the Union Government in interning every suspect has obviated a perilous situation.

In 1941 I wrote a story which indicated all too clearly the shape of things to come in the Far East. It concerned the interception and sinking of the 17,000-ton liner *Rangitane*, and nine or ten other steamers in the Pacific, by three raiders sailing under the Rising Sun of Japan. The colours were also painted on their sides, though the launches which put out from them to take off the passengers and crews all flew the Swastika.

What struck me as the most significant happening of all was the fact that the *Rangitane* was picked up in the middle of the night by two of the raiders, which lay right across her route, *no more than half a mile away*. Proceeding on her way, with all lights extinguished, and on a special route supposed to be a complete secret, the *Rangitane* was suddenly flooded by searchlights and shelled. Amidst dreadful scenes of death and fire, the liner was stopped and lay rocking on the ocean until half a dozen Nazis launches arrived on the scene, with orders to abandon the ship in the shortest possible time. As soon as that had been done, the *Rangitane*, a ship which had cost over a million pounds and carried another couple of million pounds worth of cargo, was sent to the bottom.

A stringent inquiry held by the New Zealand and Com-

monwealth Governments failed to throw the slightest light on how the *Rangitane's* route had become known to the enemy. There was treachery somewhere without a doubt, but on whose part?

The probabilities are that Japanese agents in Wellington, from whence the *Rangitane* had sailed, obtained this precious information. After the sinking of the main prize, the three raiders turned North and during the ensuing week succeeded in destroying another nine Australian vessels. They lay off the important phosphate island of Nauru—formerly a German possession—and intercepted three ships which they sank in rapid succession.

All these attacks were carried out with sudden savagery and without any preliminary orders to "heave too", which are supposed to be usual in sea warfare.

It was gradually revealed to the prisoners how efficiently these raiders were equipped. One of them, known as the *Manyo Maru*, had been fitted out as a warship. She carried 8-inch guns, and her ratings were highly-trained seamen, insolent to a degree to their victims, even if the iron discipline they worked under prevented any active ill-treatment.

This raid must have been planned to the last detail. After putting in at an island which the prisoners believed to be one of the Carolines mandated to Japan, this formidable little force, with some 700 or 800 captives, turned west and landed all of them, with a few exceptions, on the island of Emirau, in what was formerly the Bismarck Archipelago owned by Germany. It had come under the mandate of the Commonwealth Government by the Treaty of Versailles, and it says a good deal for the German naval intelligence that these raiders could have lain off this island with little or no fear of discovery.

No untoward consequences overtook the captives once they were ashore. They found a copra planter who could send over to Rabaul, in New Guinea, for a ship to take them to Australia, and after some six weeks as eventful as anyone could desire, they all reached Sydney.

Now, here was a straw which clearly indicated that Japan would shortly be joining the Axis Powers. With their characteristic duplicity, the Tokio government at first denied

pointblank any knowledge of these raiders, or of the fact that they had been using the Carolines as a refitting base. Probably we were in no position, as has been all too sadly proved since, to call the Japanese to account. Many months were to elapse before they suddenly struck at Pearl Harbour and crippled any initial act the United States might take when they entered the war.

Deep mystery surrounds the apparent absence of any information from the British and American intelligence officers in the Far East concerning the gigantic operations which the Japanese began without warning. No news appears to have reached Honolulu, much less Singapore. We had known, of course, when the Nipponese soldiery invaded Indo-China, that something would shortly be on the move. Nevertheless, we were caught unprepared in a way that speaks volumes for the cleverness of these cunning foes.

One might say that the Japanese secret service is very nearly the best in the world. It has operated in the Far East with astounding success for a matter of twenty years. I have known officers of the Singapore police, who all told the same story—that the Straits Settlements were overrun with well-trained agents, working in all manner of guises and dangerously familiar with all the details of the great naval base at Singapore. One of these men, a merchant named Nishimura, was caught red-handed, but before any confession could be forced from him, he committed suicide in the presence of the police.

Burma represented another tragedy which might have been avoided. It was no secret to some of us who knew the inner history of the Great War in that part of the world, that there was sedition in Burma.

A serious rebellion broke out in 1916, followed by the hanging of some of the ringleaders in Rangoon. Coming down to the present war, we received a demand for independence from the native Premier, U Saw, another straw in the wind to tell us what would probably happen in that land, as Kipling puts it:

“Where the flyin’-fishes play,
And the dawn comes up like thunder outer China crost
the bay.”

We had plenty more of the same trouble in India during the Great War, another fact of which our enemies are not in ignorance. It was a question which engaged the serious attention of the gallant Captain Franz von Papen, now German ambassador to Turkey. Several of these revolutionaries who arrived in New York to receive German money were arrested and put out of harm's way. Others, again, succeeded in reaching Berlin, and were made much of in the hope that they might foment in India a rebellion which would seriously weaken our strength in Europe.

All these problems, as we know only too well, have repeated themselves to-day, magnified a hundred times now that Japan is fighting against us.

Life holds many surprises in store for us. As I have related in the opening chapter of this book, I little dreamt when I arrived in London in 1911 and saw the German Emperor driving through London, that the day would come when I should be walking through his palaces at Potsdam, and writing a book with the man who had been his body-guard for twenty-five years.

Equally unconscious was I in watching Mr. J. B. Joel's colt, Sunstar, win the Derby a couple of months later, that the day would arrive for me to stay with the multi-millionaire who owned the horse and to hear at first hand the dramatic story of how this famous animal won the Blue Riband of the Turf on what were practically three legs.

Yet these are the coincidences that occur to us, and especially to journalists. I mention these matters because of another strange happening with which I had some professional association. It is probably still the most bitterly-disputed topic of the present war, the surrender of the Belgian armies by King Leopold in May 1940.

I had gone over to Ostend in the summer of 1935 for a brief holiday and was about to have lunch one day when the news came over the radio that Astrid, Queen of the Belgians, had been accidentally killed while motoring with the King, near Küssnacht in Switzerland.

There is no necessity for me to repeat any details of this poignant tragedy, which came to the bereaved husband and the Belgian people like a blow over the heart. Momentary

carelessness on the King's part in looking down at a map, caused the wheel to turn slightly in his hand—he was driving himself—with the result that the car swerved, struck a tree stump and killed the beautiful young Queen.

I was in Brussels some few days later when the State funeral took place and, if I live to be a hundred, I shall never forget the pathetic sight the stricken Leopold presented as he walked behind the royal hearse. Haggard of face, his shoulders bent, his whole demeanour that of a man to whom life no longer mattered, he looked a figure of tragedy which brought tears to the eyes of his subjects. Even more pitiful, perhaps, was the sight of the three poor little children who came behind him in a carriage, the Crown Prince, Baudouin; the pretty girl, Josephine Charlotte, and the baby boy, Prince Albert of Liége.

As the procession wended its way to the Church of St. Gudule, there were few who watched it unmoved. How many of us, I wonder, dreamed that in less than five years Leopold III would be a prisoner-of-war in German hands and that Belgium itself would once again be overrun by those hordes which had occupied the land a generation ago?

Had anyone told me that all this would come to pass, and furthermore, that I would be hearing from the King's own Ministers in London the dramatic sequence of events that brought about the capitulation of the Belgian forces, I would have told them not to talk arrant nonsense.

Yet so it proved; I was the English journalist to write the official version of the Belgian collapse, and also to publish the statement that King Leopold was permitted to make by his captors shortly after he was taken from the battlefield and incarcerated at the Château de Laeken. The Primate of Belgium, Cardinal van Roey, was given authority from the enemy to visit the King and from his Majesty received the historic document that fully described the catastrophe that had overtaken the army.

Looking back on all this crushing disaster with an impartial mind and the knowledge that neither Britain nor France was much better prepared than Belgium to meet the mechanized might of Germany, there seems to be little doubt that King Leopold's surrender was wise in the long run. He was bitterly condemned at the time, and is still

condemned by many people, for failing to give Viscount Gort any proper warning of what he intended to do.

Leopold's answer to that charge took two forms—that he had twice warned the British Commander-in-Chief that he could not hold out much longer; and, secondly, that two messengers were sent to British Headquarters the night before the capitulation to notify Lord Gort that he would be laying down his arms at daybreak the following morning.

There the controversy must rest. Gort's dispatches give a considerably different colour to the whole affair and beyond remarking that what is done, cannot be undone, no purpose would be served by any further recrimination. Leopold has since contracted amorganatic marriage and in all probability he will abdicate when Belgium is freed from German oppression.

CHAPTER XIX

CRUCIAL YEARS

THESE thirty years of which I have written are, in my candid opinion, the most important years in British history, and in that of the entire world as well, if it comes to that.

This pregnant period has witnessed two devastating wars which have convulsed the earth. Great nations have gone into eclipse; old and apparently decadent nations have been galvanized into fresh life. Three great European dynasties and several smaller ones have vanished. In Russia we have seen the greatest social experiment that civilization has ever known successfully surmounting all the ailments of political infancy; in Italy a partially justified renaissance of an ancient race, whose history is older than Christianity itself.

Spain may yet recover much of her former glory; France may lose all that the Revolution brought with Napoleon Bonaparte. Germany's short-lived Empire succumbed after forty-eight years and became a Republic, only for another ruler, infinitely more autocratic than the Hohenzollerns, to arise. Austria has lost her Hapsburg rulers and now exists under German domination; the Hungarians, dissatisfied

partners of the Dual Monarchy, are now an independent State, with a future that can only be described as highly uncertain.

Revolution and evolution go on apace; we have seen many happenings in countries which hitherto bowed the knee to British finance, all pointing to the one thing—that much of our former source of wealth, invisible exports in the form of invested capital, has irretrievably disappeared. South American States have either ignored their obligations outright, or else compounded them for a small percentage, with an implied threat that we can take it or leave it.

All of this adds up to the same answer—they can tweak the lion's tail with impunity. They have seen the mighty Britain meekly sit down while Germany repudiated the terms of the Treaty of Versailles; they must also have had many a good laugh at the spectacle of the Bank of England actually lending huge sums to the former enemy. Why should they pay anybody while Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Rumanians and Bulgarians could go to London and borrow money which they never intended to repay?

There once existed a time in British history when such behaviour would have brought a punitive expedition to enforce payment of such debts, the time of the famous Lord Palmerston. Even down to the period of the Boer War the Downing Street government would not have tolerated tricks so injurious to British prestige. Sad indeed has been the decline ever since. I have lived through the days when Germany's last preparations for war upon the world were complete. I have seen us blithely despatch a puny little Expeditionary Force to the Continent in August 1914, which, but for a miracle, must have been annihilated.

Marshal Foch once told Ward Price, the *Daily Mail* foreign correspondent, who knows more about Continental politics than all the wizards of Whitehall put together, that if another European War came in the near future, the Germans would not make the same mistakes they had made in 1914; this time they would break through. The miracle could not occur twice.

I can corroborate the proven truth of that prophecy from information as to the secret service organized by Colonel Nicolai. He was clear that the parsimonious policy of his

government in the Great War would not be adopted by the Nazis, any more than they intended to worry themselves about such trifles as the neutrality of the smaller nations. The starvation that beat them in 1917-18 would be obviated by utilizing a conquered Europe as a colossal granary for Nazi needs. Where in the Great War they had contented themselves with seizing a few thousand Belgian *chomeurs* for labour purposes, they would now transfigure the whole Continent, until one huge slave compound was working for the German war machine.

War, in effect, would be Europe's chief industry, not the ordinary industrialism for producing goods which nobody wanted. If Germany found tariff walls everywhere to prevent her dumping the goods she could manufacture in unlimited quantities, if her surplus population could emigrate nowhere, then she must take effective reprisals against the world in the shape of war.

Practically all wars are economic in their origin. German imperialism, and the desire for expansion of trade and population, enabled the militarists of Potsdam to enthuse madly the people of the Fatherland to fight in 1914. The same race, smarting under the alleged outrages imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, have responded to the exploitation of their grievances by Adolf Hitler and his satellites.

Japanese war-mongers have found an equally fertile field for their ambitions in the argument that they, a race of 90,000,000 clever and industrious people, have been confined in their comparatively small islands while Britain, France, Holland and America exploited the untold riches of the Far East. No country would have them as immigrants; they could not enter the United States or Australia, and their cheaply-produced goods were only possible through an appallingly low standard of living difficult to maintain in face of the ever-increasing western methods creeping into their existence.

Proud but impoverished Italy had much the same argument to put forward; her nationals, with the exception of hotel and restaurant workers, could not emigrate to desirable foreign countries, and more especially to America and the British Empire.

Who is to wonder, then, that Germany, Japan and Italy

should find a common cause of grievance against Britain and America? If these countries would not open their ports to both goods and immigrants, then force must be resorted to.

There were contributory causes in Europe to add fuel to the flame—the struggle for existence on the part of the independent States created by the Treaty of Versailles. The Czechs in particular, the Poles, even the Lithuanians, the Latvians and the Estonians, not to mention the Austrians, made it their business, from bitter experience in the past, to build walls to keep out German manufacturers. They all meant to foster their own industries, and so Europe just became one glorified *Octroi*, with hordes of officials to collect the duties.

England did much the same. Under the influence of Continental dumping—Germany not being the only offender—Free Trade went by the board and the coming of the Second World War drew nearer still.⁴ Nations ceased to have any friendly intercourse; it became necessary to carry passports and travel, if you must, under restrictions which were merely a perpetuation of the war conditions.

The Churches tell us, and many statesmen as well, that the populations of the European races are fast declining; it is only a matter of time before they dwindle to vanishing point.

Any theory more fallacious and misleading it would be impossible to imagine. Over-production of population, which in its turn over-produces goods for which there is no real market, has been the main cause of two world wars that most of us have lived through. This mechanical age of ours has brought about a condition where one man with the necessary machine can do the work of ten. Mass-produced motor cars are a case in point, as is the textile trade. The Bata Boot factory in Czechoslovakia could have swamped the European demand, given the opportunity. We in England have sufficient boot factories to supply the world; so have the United States.

Our Dominions and Colonies, always our best markets, were slowly but surely building up their own manufactures with the aid of heavy import duties. They had all the materials at hand; all they required was the skilled labour and the machinery.

We sold to Japanese and Indian industrialists as much of our textile machinery as they wanted, and then began to wonder why our markets all over the globe began to diminish year by year. The answer was cheap labour and raw materials on the spot.

Coming back from the Continent on one occasion I got to talking with a director of Cammel Laird's, the big naval shipbuilders of Birkenhead.

"Years ago," he said, "when the Japanese were creating a Navy, we used to get a good many orders from them. They would purchase a battleship, or perhaps a large cruiser, and a naval delegation would travel to England to acquire information. It was my function to take them round the works.

"I would start off with ten of them; but one by one they slipped away, peeping and prying everywhere in places where they were not wanted, but exquisitely polite about it all. By the time I had finished, I was lucky to have one officer remaining, and he a junior who had no doubt been ordered to keep me company to the last.

"As time went on, the orders grew fewer and fewer. We received many inquiries for warships and the necessary blue-prints, which cost us hundreds of pounds—but no orders. What they were now doing, of course, was building the ships from our plans. Eventually we stopped this underhand game by saying 'cash with inquiry'. After that, they ceased to trouble us."

I tell this little story to indicate why Japan is at war with Britain and America. It is the commerce of these two countries that she covets and if she can hold the oil, the rubber and the tin of Burma and the East Indies, she will acquire a position, with the low-priced labour at her disposal, which will make her the dominating factor in the whole of the Eastern world, if not further afield. The Japanese know nothing about trade union rates of pay, and their rulers care less.

These problems cannot be ignored by future British governments. After this war is over, we shall be shouldering a National Debt of something like thirty thousand million pounds, which is a profound difference from the £970,000,000 we owed in 1914. Even if all this colossal sum be funded at two and a half per cent, it means that the

fixed annual debt charges in the Budget will be £750,000,000 per annum, plus, of course, the annual expenditure, which involves us in not less than a thousand millions a year. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will thus be budgeting for £1,750,000,000 every April, eight and a half times as much as was required prior to 1914. Income tax was then a shilling in the £; it has since reached a flat rate of ten shillings in the £, with sur-tax to a point that is effectively destroying all large fortunes.

All excisable goods are now fantastically levied upon; a bottle of whisky that could once be bought for three-and-sixpence costs twenty-five shilling, a packet of twenty cigarettes formerly purchasable for the nimble sixpence costs two shilling and fourpence, and so on. Food, it is true, has been effectively pegged down by price control and government subsidies, in addition to a system of prosecution for anyone caught infringing the regulations. But these things cannot be continued indefinitely. The moment the war is over, prices will immediately soar sky-high, not so much in England, perhaps, as on the Continent.

If the cost of living in this country, and State taxation, are not drastically reduced when peace-time conditions are regained, our export trade, already sadly shrunken by comparison with the past, will decline still further. Industries in the Dominions, under the stimulus of the fortunes spent by the government during the war, will have developed to such a pitch that the English manufacturer, with his high wages and inflated cost of raw materials, will find it well-nigh impossible to compete.

Nevertheless, there is an appreciable grain of comfort to be extracted from such a depressing situation. Our principal trade rival will be the United States of America, a nation whose industrial production costs are already high and will be infinitely higher still when the "Cease Fire" sounds and everyday commerce has to be resumed. Mr. Franklin Roosevelt, an exceedingly far-seeing man, whose warnings to the American people went unheeded for so long, has told them that their war expenditure will probably amount to fifty thousand million pounds—not dollars.

The total national debts of all the belligerents combined will probably be little short of two hundred thousand million

pounds. If Germany and Japan be ignominiously defeated, the possibility of collecting any indemnities, or any worthwhile reparations, will be slight indeed, if only for the reason that their economic fabric will completely collapse.

A Germany routed in the field will in all likelihood be overrun by the Russians, the Poles, the Czechs and other peoples who have a blood account to settle with her, something that can never be wiped out in terms of money. Similarly, the Chinese might inform us that years of butchery and burning call not for Japanese yen, but for the Mosaic idea of justice, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

France will be in no condition to resume world-trading, any more than Holland and Belgium will be. The nations that will benefit will be those that still possess a mercantile marine and it needs no great imagination to visualize the fabulous prices that ships will fetch when the fighting is over, unless Britain and America combine to control them.

What are we going to do with this gigantic burden of debt that will be the principal legacy of the Second World War? Hand it down to posterity, murmuring the Biblical dictum about the sins of the fathers being visited on the children? Or shall we do what the Soviet Government did with the commitments of the Czars, and the Germans with the aftermath of the Hohenzollerns, cancel the lot? It is indeed a pretty question and one hardly discussable at present. But it does seem very rough on our children and grand-children, that they should be saddled with this crushing burden, even if they are willing to assume it as the price of their freedom.

This is the price for the follies of the past, for the fatuous optimism of statesmen who allowed a vast Empire to become defenceless. Far be it from me to allocate all the blame to the shoulders of Messrs. Baldwin and MacDonald. The cause goes back further than that, to the Liberal Government of Mr. Asquith, which fairly shrieked for a powerful foe to attack us.

Again, it is quite a moot point how far the personal animosity between King Edward VII and the Kaiser was responsible for the Great War in 1914, and of the immortal "Teddy" this can be said: he never had the slightest doubt

that his noxious nephew meant to make war on England at the right time.

What clearly emerges from all this sorry story is the fact that we shall see drastic changes in our future mode of existence. It may not be revolutionary; but it will certainly be evolutionary. Half the wealth of the world is going up in smoke and flames, or falling into the depths of the deep, blue sea. What we know as the good old days will be only a memory of the past; we shall exist either by a gigantic system of inflation, or by the deflation brought about by the cancellation of all war debts.

It is only a personal opinion when I say that the latter method appears to be the soundest in the long run. It has worked very well in Russia, and not badly in Germany.

As I have said in the Introduction to this book, the English Press has undergone drastic changes in recent years. The tendency to-day is for circulations to grow larger and larger; if anyone in Fleet Street had ventured to predict thirty years ago that any daily paper would come close to possessing three millions readers, they would have been contemptuously written off as a lunatic.

But these things have come to pass through vastly improved printing machinery, through publishing in Manchester and Glasgow as well as in London, and through inducements to readers which were unheard of in the days of our youth. The newspaper of 1944 is a complicated commercial enterprise, involving the expenditure of a few million pounds before it can hope to succeed. It will probably be many a long year before Fleet Street witnesses the birth of any new daily organ of public opinion. The initial outlay is tremendous, especially on the mechanical side. The better part of a million pounds would be necessary to instal a thoroughly modern plant, plus another huge sum for the particular type of premises that are required in the conduct of a large circulation newspaper.

Add to this the never-ending drain of the immense publicity campaigns that are required to popularize any new paper—probably another million—and you get a fair idea why we are unlikely to see any fresh competitors in that fiercely-cultivated field which is modern journalism.

How strange it is that in London, a city of over eight million inhabitants, there should be but three evening newspapers. The answer, of course, lies in the popular appeal. Most of the "Evenings" that have failed in my time were mainly political in their purpose; they had no facilities for reaching the masses, and moreover, made no effort to interest the Man in the Street in their contents. Their sporting pages were largely directed to the Public School classes and with their very limited transport facilities, they could hardly reach any readers in the outer London districts. Still, their loss is to be deplored, as is the disappearance of the *Morning Post*.

The coming of that virile personality, Viscount Cainrose, with the *Daily Telegraph*, into the field hitherto held sacred to the *Morning Post* and *The Times*, marked the decease of the scholarly and attractively-presented *Morning Post*. For a good many years it had fought a losing battle and the end was clearly in sight when it became necessary to vacate the fine, impressive building opposite the Gaiety Theatre and take up quarters in the somewhat more prosaic neighbourhood of Tudor Street.

However, Tudor Street also saw another memorable change in the history of Fleet Street when Lord Southwood, of Odhams Press, took the *Daily Herald* up to Long Acre and made it a successful modern newspaper in the space of a very few years. Great was the wonderment in the Street of Ink when the official organ of the Labour Party came out with a certified circulation of two million—all in five years. Loud were the lamentations at the ways and means employed thereto by the new member of the fold; many and frequent the predictions that the pace was too hot to last.

Of course, there always was room for a proper Labour daily when you consider that ten million men and women in England earn their living by the sweat of their brow; it is obvious that any newspaper, properly run and financed, could not but help succeeding. It was just a matter of finding the right man, not to mention the £ s. d.

One of the most distressing changes in English journalism to-day is the gradual disappearance of the magazines and the good-class reviews. Time was, and not so very long ago, when the bookstalls did a roaring trade in the monthly

magazines—the *Strand*, *Pearson's*, *Royal*, *Windsor*, *London* and several more.

Sad though it may be to record, the present generation seems to have little liking for the informative article that the monthlies used to provide. William Randolph Hearst spent a fortune in trying to popularize *Nash's Magazine*. He gave the public all the leading writers regardless of expense, and supplied a lavishly-printed production which could hardly be faulted.

Yet Nash's failed in the long run. Why? In my opinion because it attempted to be Anglo-American and did not cater sufficiently for the women. The death of Nash's coincided with the arrival of a flood of new publications exclusively devoted to the doings and wants of the fair sex—fashions, beauty hints, furnishing ideas, children's matters, which could hardly be incorporated in a magazine such as Nash's set out to be.

There is probably another cogent cause for the eclipse of practically all magazines, namely the gradual inclusion in the newspapers, both daily and Sunday, of the features which kept the monthlies alive. Again, the popularity of the short story has waned and will never return until a new generation of writers is born. The old-fashioned proprietors like Sir George Newnes and Arthur Pearson, who nursed so many fine literary craftsmen into world-wide fame, are hardly to be found these days. The cry is all for the established man, or woman; in other words, the well-advertised article. . .

Well, you can't put the clock back. The popular stories of the 'nineties read laborious and long-winded by comparison with the slick writing of fifty years later. How many youngsters of the present generation would bother to read the "Kailyard" school of authors, J. M. Barrie, Ian MacLaren, S. R. Crockett and a few others? They only know a literature which that staunch old Labour leader, George Barnes, once described to me as "mincemeat".

Notwithstanding this sad stricture on modern tendencies, I am quite certain that the standard of present-day novel writing is infinitely higher than it was twenty-five years ago. Where the really first-class novelists could be counted on the fingers of two hands, there are probably fifty. Women have come into the field with vast success, writing with an in-

tensity and an eye to detail which completely confound the critics who aver that the fair sex see, but do not remember.

And so we have undergone that gradual change which is just like life itself—the unconscious development of new thoughts and ideas, which come upon us year by year almost unnoticed. Newspapers may yet have to fight the radio for their existence; the canned comedies and tinned tragedies of film producers may well provide our only source of entertainment in the future. We have already reached the stage of being able to fly to America in a few hours, as we can now eat dehydrated food a quarter of its normal weight, yet guaranteed to contain all the proteins and vitamins required by our bodies.

One day, possibly, our newspapers will come to us in equally compressed form, or, may be, we shall all be carrying our own portable wireless sets and tune in as we require when the news bulletins are being hurled into the ether.

At any rate, when that revolutionary state does overtake us, it will not be Fleet Street that will be the licensed meddler in the affairs of other people, that so aroused the ire of Mr. Justice Darling.

It would be foolish, however, to decry the vast amount of power that is wielded by the Press of to-day, all the world over. Publicity generally has come to be recognized as a valuable national weapon. You see it exploited by government departments in a manner that was quite unknown when I arrived in Fleet Street, just the same as it is also being employed by important commercial undertakings.

Advertising has increased by leaps and bounds, resulting thereby in a revenue to newspapers which, in some cases, touches more than a couple of millions a year.

Indeed, it would be impossible for the daily Press to give their readers anything like the present diverse news if it were not for the money that is made out of advertising. That also applies to many of the magazines, especially the women's.

What wonder, then, that big fortunes are to be made by the shrewd ones who control these vast undertakings? Much as one may regret the disappearance of the small

private owner from the newspaper field, his going was more or less inevitable. He was but one more illuminating example of the tendency in many other branches of business—and, indeed, even in nations themselves—to be absorbed into richer and more powerful hands.

THE END

